

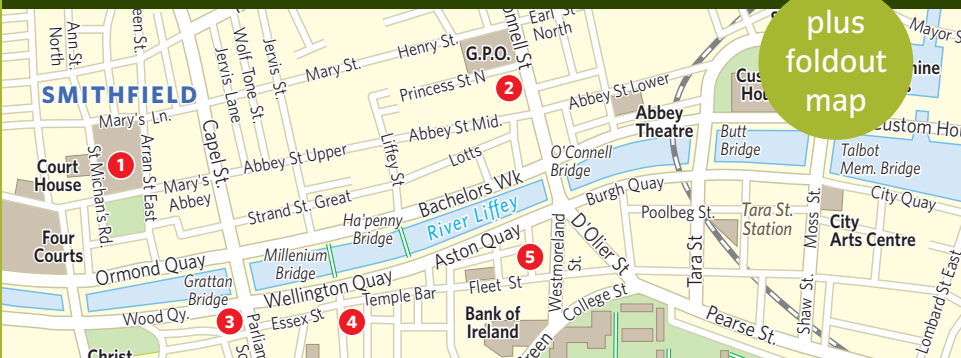
Frommer's

Ireland

day BY day



104 maps and 85 ways to see the sights



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Frommer's

Ireland day BY day



1st Edition

by Christi Daugherty & Jack Jewers



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Contents

1 Chapter 1: The Best of Ireland

- 7 Favorite Moments in Ireland
- 8 Favorite Small Towns
- 9 The Best of Ireland Outdoors
- 10 The Best Lodging Experiences
- 11 The Best Dining Experiences
- 12 The Best Shopping Experiences
- 13 Favorite Ireland Festivals
- 14 The Best Ruins & Ancient Sites
- 15 The Best Museums
- 16 The Best Churches
- 17 The Best Castles

18 Chapter 2: Strategies for Seeing Ireland

22 Chapter 3: The Best All-Ireland Itineraries

- 24 The Best of Ireland in 1 Week
- 28 The Best of Ireland in 2 Weeks
- 32 Ireland Off the Beaten Track
- 36 Free & Dirt Cheap Ireland
- 40 Ireland with Kids
- 44 Ancient Ireland

46 Chapter 4: Dublin & the Best Day Trips

- 48 Favorite Moments in Dublin
- 50 Dublin in 1 Day
- 54 Dublin in 2 Days
- 58 Dublin in 3 Days
- 62 Dublin Pub-Crawl
- 66 Dublin's Best Museums
- 70 Literary Dublin
- 74 *Spotlight: Men of Letters*
- 76 Trinity College
- 80 Temple Bar
- 82 Dublin Shopping Best Bets
- 83 Dublin Shopping A to Z
- 90 Dublin Restaurant Best Bets
- 91 Dublin Restaurants A to Z
- 100 Dublin Hotel Best Bets

PAGE 7



PAGE 25



PAGE 61





- 101 Dublin Hotels A to Z
- 110 Dublin Nightlife Best Bets
- 111 Dublin Nightlife A to Z
- 116 Glendalough & Wicklow Day Trip
- 120 Kilkenny Day Trip
- 124 Ancient County Meath Day Trip
- 129 Dublin Fast Facts

130 Chapter 5: Counties Wexford & Waterford

- 132 Wexford & Waterford in 3 Days
- 134 Wexford & Waterford in 1 Week
- 140 Wexford Town
- 143 Where to Stay & Dine in Wexford Town
- 144 Around Wexford
- 147 Where to Stay & Dine Around Wexford
- 148 Waterford City
- 151 Where to Stay & Dine in Waterford City
- 152 Around Waterford
- 154 Where to Stay & Dine Around Waterford
- 156 Wexford & Waterford for History Buffs
- 160 Wexford & Waterford with Kids
- 162 Wexford & Waterford Outdoors
- 165 Wexford & Waterford Fast Facts

166 Chapter 6: Cork City & County Cork

- 168 County Cork in 3 Days
- 170 County Cork in 1 Week
- 174 Cork City
- 180 Where to Stay in Cork City
- 181 Where to Dine in Cork City
- 185 Cork City Nightlife
- 186 Kinsale
- 190 Where to Stay in Kinsale
- 192 Where to Dine in Kinsale
- 194 County Cork for Foodies
- 198 *Spotlight: Devil for the Drink*
- 200 County Cork with Kids
- 202 County Cork Outdoors
- 206 East County Cork
- 210 Where to Stay & Dine in East Cork
- 212 West County Cork

- 217 Where to Stay in West Cork
- 219 Where to Dine in West Cork
- 221 County Cork Fast Facts

222 Chapter 7: Killarney

- 224 Favorite Moments in Killarney
- 226 Killarney in 1 Day
- 230 *Spotlight: From the Pipes to the Pogues*
- 232 Killarney in 2 Days
- 236 Killarney in 3 Days
- 238 Killarney Lakes
- 240 Killarney Shopping A to Z
- 241 Killarney Shopping Best Bets
- 243 Killarney Restaurants A to Z
- 243 Killarney Restaurant Best Bets
- 246 Killarney Hotels A to Z
- 247 Killarney Hotel Best Bets
- 249 Killarney Nightlife A to Z
- 249 Killarney Nightlife Best Bets
- 251 Killarney Fast Facts

252 Chapter 8: County Kerry

- 254 County Kerry in 3 Days
- 258 County Kerry in 1 Week
- 264 The Ring of Kerry
- 268 Where to Stay & Dine on the Ring of Kerry
- 270 The Skellig Islands
- 272 *Spotlight: Monk Business*
- 274 Kenmare
- 276 Where to Stay & Dine in Kenmare
- 278 The Dingle Peninsula
- 282 Where to Stay & Dine in Dingle
- 284 County Kerry with Kids
- 288 The Best Hikes in County Kerry
- 291 County Kerry Fast Facts

292 Chapter 9: Galway City

- 294 Favorite Moments in Galway City
- 296 Galway City in 1 Day
- 298 Galway City in 2 Days
- 300 Aran Islands Day Trip
- 302 Spiddal & Salthill Day Trip

PAGE 179



PAGE 229



PAGE 358





PAGE 327



PAGE 27



- 304 Galway City Shopping A to Z
- 304 Galway City Shopping Best Bets
- 308 Galway City Restaurants A to Z
- 308 Galway City Restaurant Best Bets
- 310 Galway City Hotels A to Z
- 310 Galway City Hotel Best Bets
- 312 Galway City Nightlife & Entertainment A to Z
- 312 Galway City Nightlife Best Bets
- 315 Galway City Fast Facts

316 Chapter 10: Counties Galway & Clare

- 318 Counties Galway & Clare in 3 Days
- 320 Counties Galway & Clare in 1 Week
- 324 *Spotlight: If These Walls Could Talk*
- 326 Connemara
- 330 The Burren
- 334 The Clare Coast
- 336 Counties Galway & Clare with Kids
- 338 Where to Stay & Dine in County Galway
- 339 Where to Stay & Dine in County Clare
- 341 Galway & Clare Fast Facts

342 Chapter 11: Counties Sligo & Mayo

- 344 Counties Sligo & Mayo in 3 Days
- 346 Counties Sligo & Mayo in 1 Week
- 350 Sligo Town
- 353 Where to Stay & Dine in Sligo Town
- 354 Around Sligo Town
- 357 Where to Stay & Dine Around Sligo Town
- 358 Westport
- 361 Where to Stay & Dine in Westport
- 362 *Spotlight: Women of Action*
- 364 Achill Island
- 365 Where to Stay & Dine on Achill Island
- 366 Ballina
- 369 Where to Stay & Dine in Ballina
- 370 Counties Sligo & Mayo with Kids
- 372 Counties Sligo & Mayo Outdoors
- 375 Sligo & Mayo Fast Facts

376 Chapter 12: Belfast

- 378 Favorite Moments in Belfast
- 380 Belfast in 1 Day
- 384 Belfast in 2 Days
- 388 *Spotlight: Drawing Sides*
- 390 Belfast Outdoors
- 394 Belfast Shopping Best Bets
- 395 Belfast Shopping A to Z
- 398 Belfast Restaurant Best Bets
- 399 Belfast Restaurants A to Z
- 402 Belfast Hotel Best Bets
- 403 Belfast Hotels A to Z
- 406 Belfast Nightlife Best Bets
- 407 Belfast Nightlife A to Z
- 410 Carrickfergus Castle & Belfast Lough
- 414 The Ards Peninsula
- 417 Belfast Fast Facts

418 Chapter 13: Northern Ireland

- 420 Northern Ireland in 3 Days
- 422 Northern Ireland in 1 Week
- 424 *Spotlight: For Peat's Sake*
- 426 The Antrim Coast
- 430 Where to Stay on the Antrim Coast
- 431 Where to Dine on the Antrim Coast
- 432 Derry City
- 436 Where to Stay in Derry City
- 437 Where to Dine in Derry City
- 438 Politics & History in Northern Ireland
- 442 Northern Ireland with Kids
- 448 Northern Ireland Outdoors
- 453 Northern Ireland Fast Facts

PAGE 360



PAGE 376



PAGE 402





454 Chapter 14: Irish History & Culture

456 A Brief History of Ireland

460 A Timeline of Irish History

464 Ireland in High & Popular Culture

468 Chapter 15: The Best Special-Interest Trips

470 Organized Tours

470 Package Tours

470 Learning Trips

471 Food & Wine Tours

471 Historical Tours

471 Outdoor Activities A to Z

473 Outdoor Outfitters by County

476 Chapter 16: The Savvy Traveler

478 Before You Go

481 Getting There

482 Getting Around

483 Tips on Accommodations

485 Ireland Fast Facts

490 Index

501 Photo Credits

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How to Use This Guide

The Day by Day guides present a series of itineraries that take you from place to place. The itineraries are organized by time (The Best of Northern Ireland in 1 Week), by region (the Dingle Peninsula), by town (Kinsale), and by special interest (Ancient Ireland, Literary Dublin). You can follow these itineraries to the letter, or customize your own based on the information we provide. Within the tours, we often suggest cafes, bars, or restaurants where you can take a break. Each of these stops is marked with a coffee-cup icon ☕. In each chapter, we provide detailed hotel and restaurant reviews so you can select the places that are right for you.

The hotels, restaurants, and attractions listed in this guide have been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system**. Hotels, restaurants, attractions, shopping, and nightlife are rated on a scale of zero stars (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). In addition to the star-rating system, we also use a kids icon  to point out the best bets for families.

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express	DISC Discover
V Visa	DC Diners Club
MC MasterCard	

A Note on Prices

Frommer's lists exact prices in local currency. Currency conversions fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency exchange website such as www.oanda.com/convert/classic to check up-to-the-minute conversion rates.

In the "Take a Break" and "Best Bets" sections of this book, we have used a system of dollar signs to show a range of costs for 1 night in a hotel (the price of a double-occupancy room) or the cost of an entree at a restaurant. Use the following table to decipher the dollar signs:

COST	HOTELS	RESTAURANTS
\$	under \$100	under \$10
\$ \$	\$100–\$200	\$10–\$20
\$ \$ \$	\$200–\$300	\$20–\$30
\$ \$ \$ \$	\$300–\$400	\$30–\$40
\$ \$ \$ \$ \$	over \$400	over \$40

How to Contact Us

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please email us at frommersfeedback@wiley.com or write to:

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An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.

About the Authors

Husband and wife team **Christi Daugherty** and **Jack Jewers** have been exploring Ireland together for years. Christi has been writing *Frommer's Ireland* since 2006, and Jack has been her co-author since 2009. Christi has also contributed to several other Frommer's guides, including *MTV Ireland* and *MTV Europe*, and she authored the first edition of *Paris Day by Day*. Jack, also a filmmaker by trade, has contributed to several travel guidebooks for a variety of publishers over the years. Both Christi and Jack have Ireland in their blood. Jack grew up listening to his great aunt's tales of life in Dublin during the civil war (she once leaned out of a window during a late-night gunfight to tell them to keep the noise down—people were trying to sleep), while Christi not long ago discovered the ruins of the castle her family left behind when they fled County Donegal in the 18th century, with the English hot on their tail. Read more about the authors at www.christidaugherty.com and www.jackjewers.co.uk.

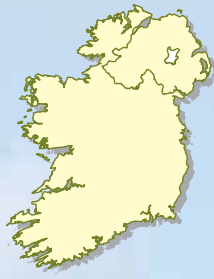
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About the Contributing Photographers

Award-winning photographer **Sean Curtin** has been on staff with Limerick-based photo agency Press 22 for more than twelve years. Belfast-born Dublin resident **Victor Ginesi** publishes his photographs in Dublin's *Northside People* and other Irish newspapers. Award-winning Dublin-based photojournalist **James Horan** (www.jameshoranshootspeople.com) is currently working on a book about Irish alternative horse culture. **Declan Masterson's** work appears in *The Irish Daily Star* and other major newspapers in Ireland. Based in the west of Ireland, award-winning photographer **Michael McLaughlin** regularly contributes to major national and regional newspapers in Ireland and Europe, including *The Irish Independent*, *The Irish Examiner*, *The Guardian*, *The Irish Times*, *The Sunday Times*, *Hello Magazine*, and *Maxim*. **Anthony Woods** (www.awoodphoto.com) works for some of the largest corporations, publishing companies, print media, and theaters in Ireland and abroad.



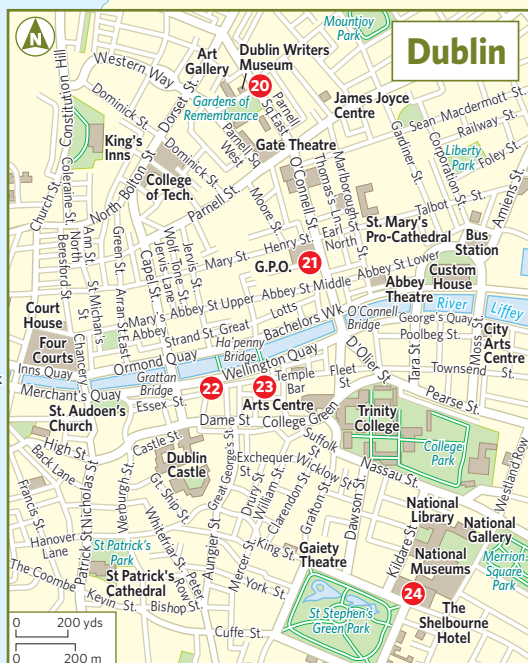


1

The Best of Ireland







Favorite Moments

- Shelbourne Hotel **24**
- General Post Office **21**
- Temple Bar **23**
- Newgrange **5**
- Kinsale **9**
- Belfast Peace Wall **3**
- Giant's Causeway **1**

Favorite Small Towns

- Carlingford **4**
- Inistioge **6**
- Kinsale **8**
- Kenmare **10**
- Dingle **12**

Best of Ireland Outdoors

- Killarney National Park **11**
- The Burren National Park **14**
- Connemara National Park **16**
- Giant's Causeway **2**

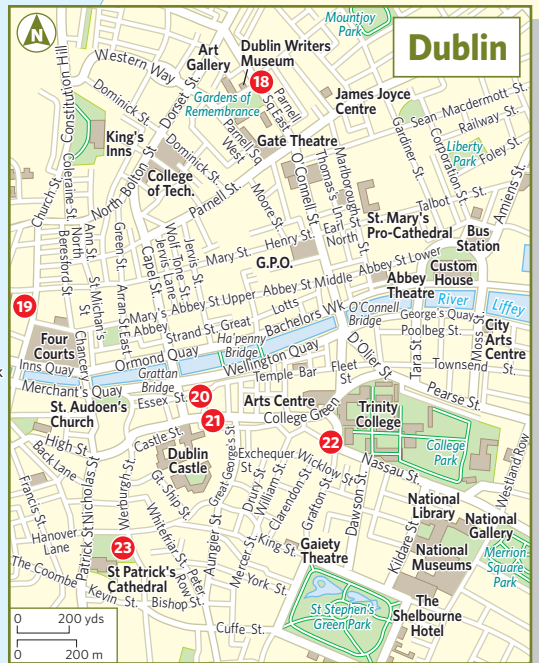
Best Lodging Experiences

- Gregans Castle Hotel **15**
- Moy House **13**
- The Bervie **17**
- Temple House **18**

Best Dining Experiences

- Eden **22**
- Chapter One **20**
- Fishy Fishy Café **7**
- Cromlech Lodge **19**
- Gregans Castle Hotel **15**





Best Shopping Experiences

- Brown Thomas **22**
- Old English Market **11**
- Avoca Handweavers **14**

Best Ireland Festivals

- St. Patrick's Day **20**
- Cork Jazz Festival **10**
- Kinsale Gourmet Food Festival **12**
- Galway Arts Festival **16**

Best Ruins & Ancient Sites

- Newgrange **3**
- Glendalough **4**
- The Rock of Cashel **7**
- Skellig Michael **13**
- Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery **17**

Best Museums

- Chester Beatty Library **21**
- Dublin Writers Museum **18**
- Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition **5**
- Ulster Museum **2**

Best Churches

- St. Patrick's Cathedral **23**
- St. Michan's Church **19**
- St. Anne's Church **9**
- St. Mary's Cathedral **15**

Best Castles

- Kilkenny Castle **6**
- Lismore Castle **8**
- Carrickfergus Castle **1**



Favorite Moments in Ireland

Taking afternoon tea at the Shelbourne Hotel,

Dublin. It's easy to feel like an overgrown kid in the fanciest candy store at the Shelbourne, as you sink into huge leather armchairs while demolishing a tower of cakes and daintily cut sandwiches. If we're in the mood for a history fix afterward, we'll sneak upstairs to find room no. 112, where the Irish constitution was written in 1922. If nobody's staying there—and the manager is in a good mood—we might get to look inside. See map p 2, **24**; see p 108.

Touching the bullet holes in the walls of the

General Post Office in Dublin. It's hard to overstate what a potent national symbol this humble mail hub is. Patrick Pearse read his independence proclamation from its front steps in 1916, and the original document is now displayed inside. The post office was also the scene of fierce fighting during the civil war of 1922, which left bullet scars that pock the facade. See map p 2, **21**; see p 53, **7**.

Walking through Dublin's Temple Bar district,

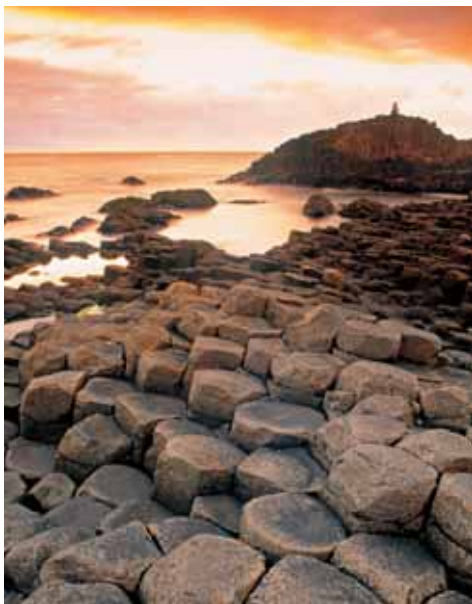
which is really two different neighborhoods, depending on the time of day. Most of the time it's the city's cultural hub, with its concentration of boutiques and art galleries. But after night falls, the pubs and clubs open and quickly fill up with a raucous collection of partiers so young and bright they'll make you feel wistful if you're a day over 25. See map p 2, **23**; see chapter 4, p 80.

Walking down the long stone passage at

Newgrange (Co. Meath) and trying to get our heads around the fact that we're standing in a passage grave that's more than 5,000 years old—older than the Egyptian pyramids or Stonehenge. With its elaborate carvings of spirals, diamonds, and concentric circles, this tomb is one of Western Europe's ancient wonders. See map p 2, **5**; see p 125, **2**.

Discovering what's new in Kinsale's ever-

growing restaurant scene (Co. Cork). Kinsale has gone from sleepy fishing port to the food capital of Ireland. Every time we go, there's a new hot place in town to try out. They don't all last very long, but those that do are in



> PAGE 1 The 15th-century Ross Castle. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Dublin's Temple Bar. **THIS PAGE** The basalt stepping stones of the Giant's Causeway.

themselves worth the trip to County Cork. See map p 2, **8**; see chapter 6, p 186.

Walking by the murals of the Belfast peace

wall. There are teenagers in the North today who have never known sectarian bloodshed firsthand. Yet this long, ugly wall dividing Catholic neighborhoods from near-identical Protestant streets is still covered with 20th-century political street art—much of it preaching nonviolence—in remembrance of the Troubles. See map p 2, **3**; see p 386, **6** & **7**.

Walking the path down to the Giant's Causeway (Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland).

It's an otherworldly experience to hike the half-mile down this natural wonder—37,000 columns of basalt at the base of cliffs along the Antrim Coast. We like to make the trek just before sunset, when the stones form haunting silhouettes against the endless sea. See map p 2, **1**; see p 428, **6**.

Favorite Small Towns



> The colorful town of Kenmare was originally called Neidin, meaning “little nest.”

Carlingford (Co. Louth). The ancient name for Carlingford—easily the prettiest town in Louth, Ireland’s smallest county—is *Cuan Aighneach*, which translates as “Haven of the People with the Perfect Reputation.” The Irish folk hero Cúchulainn, for one, is said to have single-handedly defeated the armies of Ulster in an epic battle waged in the surrounding hills. Today the original medieval street patterns are still intact, at the edge of glassy Carlingford Lough, and a stern 13th-century castle presides over the townscape. See map p 2, 4.

Inistioge (Co. Kilkenny). If you experience a sense of déjà vu while strolling through this village near Kilkenny, it’s probably because it’s one of the most photographed—and filmed—places in Ireland. On the banks of the River Nore, where a nine-arched stone bridge curves through seemingly endless green hills and sprawling woodland, Inistioge was an

important monastic center in early Christian times. These days the only pilgrims it attracts are those in search of a rural idyll and beautiful photos. Walk through the tree-lined square, past the remains of a Norman castle, and then head out of town to the peaceful Woodstock Gardens. See map p 2, 6; see p 122, 6.

Kinsale (Co. Cork). A short drive yet a world apart from busy Cork City, this fishing village draws a sophisticated crowd with its bounty of excellent restaurants. Of course we come to eat but also to watch the white sailboats bobbing gently in the shimmering blue harbor; or to wander Kinsale’s handsome, well-kept old streets and breeze through a few boutiques and galleries; perhaps even to check out the town’s small but stalwart selection of historic sites. See map p 2, 8; see chapter 6, p 186.

Kenmare (Co. Kerry). It’s easy to fall in love with this colorful 17th-century town on Kenmare Bay surrounded by mountains. It is home to several elegant hotels and good restaurants, so it makes a great base for exploring the Ring of Kerry and Killarney National Park. You can browse the open-air market in the town square on Wednesdays for crafts and locally sourced wares. There’s even a Bronze Age stone circle hidden away at the back of the square. No admission fee—just you and ancient history, together in a paddock by the side of the road. See map p 2, 10; see chapter 8, p 274.

Dingle (Co. Kerry). At the foot of steep hills and on the edge of a breathtaking stretch of coast, this brightly colored town is one of our favorite stops in County Kerry. It’s a peaceful place, miles from anywhere, and the drive to Dingle from Tralee is spectacular. The most famous resident is a dolphin who adopted the place years back and has been attracting visitors ever since. Peak season is in August, when the Dingle Races draw crowds from throughout the area to watch the horses run every other weekend. See map p 2, 12; see chapter 8, p 278.

The Best of Ireland Outdoors

Killarney National Park (Co. Kerry). Lakes, mountains, woodland trails, crumbling abbeys, a medieval castle, and a Victorian mansion—who could ask for more from a park? Horse-drawn buggies ferry visitors to and fro between the great beauty spots, and around the grounds of **Muckross House** (p 226). Those who want to explore at their own pace can take one of the well-designed **nature trails**, although more ambitious visitors will no doubt be drawn to one of the park's more strenuous hiking routes, which pass through some of the most spectacular scenery in County Kerry. The park has three **lakes**, containing 30 islands—one of which conceals the 7th-century monastery of **Innisfallen** (p 238). You could spend a week exploring before you saw everything. See map p 2, **11**; see chapter 7.

The Burren National Park (Co. Clare). Spread over 1,653 hectares (4,085 acres) in the northern part of County Clare, this expanse of tumbling cliffs, lunar planes, and plant life is otherworldly. About 7,000 years ago, humans first began to leave their mark in the form of Stone Age burial monuments such as the famed **Poul nabrone Dolmen** and **Gleninsheen Wedge Tomb**, plus around 120 dolmens, 500 ring forts, ancient churches, and crumbling castles. The best routes through the Burren's limestone pavements and terraces, shale uplands, and lakes are to be found along the **Burren Way**. This 42km (26-mile) signposted route takes in some of the most breathtaking scenery in Ireland. See map p 2, **14**; see chapter 10, p 330.

Connemara National Park (Co. Galway). Another of Ireland's great national parks, Connemara is a stark, untamed landscape of boggy plains and dramatic mountains (Oscar Wilde praised its "savage beauty"). Visitors can hike the **Twelve Bens** (also called the Twelve Pins), a small mountain range near the only fiord in Ireland. Unsurprisingly, this is prime hiking territory, but one of the most memorable ways to cover ground in the park is on horseback. See map p 2, **16**; see chapter 10, p 326.



> *The Burren National Park is rich in archaeological remains from the Neolithic period to the Middle Ages.*

The Giant's Causeway (Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland). This extraordinary rock formation—at the foot of steep cliffs stretching out into the sea—encompasses more than 37,000 tightly packed basalt columns, all almost perfectly hexagonal. In ancient times, people thought they were made by giants. Scientists maintain they took shape tens of millions of years ago through the cooling of volcanic lava. See map p 2, **2**; see p 428, **6**.

The Best Lodging Experiences

Gregans Castle Hotel, Ballyvaughan (Co. Clare). This ivy-covered, light-suffused manor house in County Clare affords expansive views of the Burren's rocky hills. The drawing room and hallways are filled with heirlooms, and the walls are decorated with Raymond Piper's mural paintings of the surrounding countryside. All the spacious guest rooms have splendid views, and, on sunny days, you can play croquet on the flat lawn or feed the hotel's donkeys and ponies. The restaurant is becoming a destination in itself. In 2009, Bridgestone restaurant critic John McKenna wrote, "Is this the best food in Ireland?" See map p 2, **15**; see p 340.

Moy House, Lahinch (Co. Clare). This unusual 19th-century tower house overlooking the sea in County Clare is beautiful inside and out. Rooms have original paintings, period antiques, and comfortable modern beds enveloped in crisp Irish linens. Fresh, local produce is used in the kitchen, and dining in is worthwhile. About an hour's drive from Shannon Airport, it makes a good first or last night's stop. See map p 2, **13**; see p 340.

Temple House, Ballymote (Co. Sligo). A grand manor house tucked away amid County Sligo's pastures, forests, and terraced gardens, overlooks a lake and the ruins of a Knights Templar castle. The Perceval family has lived on the premises since 1665, and when you stay here you are sleeping in what were once their bedrooms. A short walk from the house, the walled garden supplies the fruit for breakfast and the vegetables for dinner. A night's stay here is a unique and welcoming experience. See map p 2, **18**; see p 357.

The Bervie, Achill Island (Co. Mayo). Standing strong at the edge of the sea on Achill Island in County Mayo, the Bervie cradles you protectively within its sturdy walls. Once a coast guard station, the whitewashed building has been a hotel for two generations. Many rooms have views of the sea, a few feet away. All are filled with distinctive, locally made furniture and art. The sunny breakfast room affords dramatic views of the sea and the cliffs across the bay. See map p 2, **17**; see p 365.

> Built as a mid-18th-century country home, County Clare's Moy House has been updated for 21st-century luxury.



The Best Dining Experiences



➤ *It's hard to go wrong when dining in Kinsale, but the Fishy Fishy Café is a perennial favorite.*

Eden, Dublin. This is one of Dublin's hippest eateries, a cool minimalist space with an open-plan kitchen overlooking Meeting House Square. The food shows influences from around the world, with a distinctly pan-European edge. Homey smoked haddock or filet of monkfish might appear on the menu alongside roast maret duck or thyme-scented risotto with snow peas and summer squash. See map p 2, 22; see map p 92, 21; see p 95.

Chapter One, Dublin. Soothingly lit and tastefully decorated, Chapter One is arguably Dublin's most atmospheric restaurant, filling the vaulted basement space of the Dublin Writers Museum. The food is also among the best in town. Meals are prepared with local, organic ingredients, all cleverly used in dishes such as rabbit with smoked bacon and asparagus or shoulder of suckling pig with carrot and cumin. See map p 2, 20; see map p 92, 1; see p 94.

Fishy Fishy Café, Kinsale (Co. Cork). The food is outstanding, and prices could be worse at this marvelous joint in foodie Kinsale. There's nothing complicated about the incomparably

fresh vegetables, farmhouse cheeses, imaginative salads, homemade breads, and fresh seafood from local sources (they'll even tell you the names of who caught what). The only drawback is that it's open only for lunch. See map p 2, 7; see map 187, 17; see p 192.

Gregans Castle Hotel, Ballyvaughan (Co. Clare). See previous page, "The Best Lodging Experiences."

Cromleach Lodge, Castlebaldwin (Co. Sligo). It's worth the drive 32km (20 miles) south of Sligo Town to dine at this lovely country house overlooking Lough Arrow. The panoramic views are secondary, however, to Chef Moira Tighe's food, which has won a fistful of prestigious awards. The menu changes nightly, depending on what is freshest and best from the sea and garden. It may include such dishes as filet of halibut with sun-dried tomato beurre blanc, or loin of lamb with garlic and Irish Mist. If you love it so much you want to spend the night, you're in luck—you can retire to a pleasant room, starting at €150 per night. See map p 2, 19; see p 357.

The Best Shopping Experiences



> Known for its lusciously soft knits, the Moll's Gap outpost of Avoca Handweavers also draws shoppers for its spectacular views.

Brown Thomas, Dublin. Not so much a department store as a national institution, Brown Thomas has been around in one form or another for more than 150 years, with outlets in Dublin, Galway, Cork, and Limerick. Owned by the same people as London's Selfridges, Brown Thomas now runs three Dublin-based **BT2** stores (☎ 01/605-6747) aimed at a younger, hipper market—although prices are almost as high as they are in the flagship. See map p 4, 22; see map p 84, 12; see p 86.

Old English Market, Cork (Co. Cork). This County Cork food market originated in 1610, during the reign of King James I. The present building, finished in 1786, was damaged by fire in 1980 and then brilliantly refurbished. Inside, food stands brim with impeccably fresh meats, fish, vegetables, and fruit. You'll also find tra-

ditional Cork foods such as hot buttered eggs, tripe, *crubeens* (pigs' feet), and *drisheens* (blood sausage). The market's name is a holdover from the days of English rule, when Irish were forbidden entry. See map p 4, 11; see map p 175, 9; see p 178, 9.

Avoca Handweavers, Moll's Gap (Co. Kerry). It's not often you remember a store by the view from its parking lot, but as locations go, this one is tough to beat. High on a mountain pass between Killarney and Kenmare in County Kerry, this isolated shop is an outpost of the famed County Wicklow weavers who specialize in handwoven blankets and throws, delicate knitted clothing, and pottery and jewelry in vivid colors. The excellent cafe makes a great place to stop for lunch or afternoon tea and cake. See map p 4, 14; see p 241, 12.

Favorite Ireland Festivals



> Nearly a million revelers come to Dublin for the spectacular craic during the six-day St. Patrick's festival.

St. Patrick's Day in Dublin. St. Paddy's Day parades tend to be big, raucous affairs wherever they're held, so it should come as no surprise that March 17 is an extravaganza in Ireland's capital city. The parade itself is just one event among many, as Dublin hosts 6 days of music, dancing, carnival, street theater, amusement park rides, and treasure hunts in the name of Ireland's patron saint. Be warned, though—you're not the only person who thinks it sounds like fun. The festival attracts a million visitors a year (Dublin's resident population is half that size). Still, it's grand to say you were there. See map p 4, [20](#); see p 478.

Guinness Cork Jazz Festival (Co. Cork). Held every year since 1978, this is Ireland's biggest and most prestigious jazz festival. Over the years, legends such as Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, and Stéphane Grappelli have played here, and thousands of performers from all over the world take part annually. It's held at various citywide venues in late October, and many events are free. See map p 4, [10](#); see p 178.

Kinsale Gourmet Festival (Co. Cork). It's a strange quirk of fate that has transformed Kinsale from a tiny fishing village into an international foodie mecca, but there could hardly be a more lovely place to loosen one's belt a notch or two. So what better time to visit than during this festival in October—a positively orgiastic celebration of good eating, which sees foodies from around the world don elasticized pants and descend hungrily on the town's many acclaimed dining establishments. See map p 4, [12](#); see p 195.

Galway Arts Festival (Co. Galway). This massive, colorful festival floods the streets of artsy Galway every July with street performers, painters, sculptors, and performance artists. It transforms the town, as huge tents go up in squares and on the waterfront, bands play on the street at night, and everybody takes part in the performance. A vibrant, friendly festival that grows every year, it's a destination in itself—well worth a special trip. See map p 4, [16](#); see p 479.

The Best Ruins & Ancient Sites

Newgrange (Co. Meath). One of the archaeological wonders of western Europe, this UNESCO World Heritage Site was built as a ceremonial mound more than 5,000 years ago—long before the Egyptian Pyramids or Stonehenge. It sits atop a hill near the Boyne, massive and mysterious, with its 200,000 tons of rock, a 6-ton capstone, and other rocks weighing up to 16 tons each. Each stone fits perfectly in the overall pattern, and the result is a mortarless, watertight feat of engineering. See map p 4, [3](#); see p 125, [2](#).

Glendalough (Co. Wicklow). This misty glen is a magical place, with its abandoned 5th-century monastery built around two dark lakes, surrounded by forests. As you wander the rocky paths beside the ancient chapels, in perpetual soft focus, the landscape exudes spirituality—absent the crowds in high season. For the optimal atmosphere, arrive very early in the morning, before the tourists descend. See map p 4, [4](#); see p 116, [1](#).

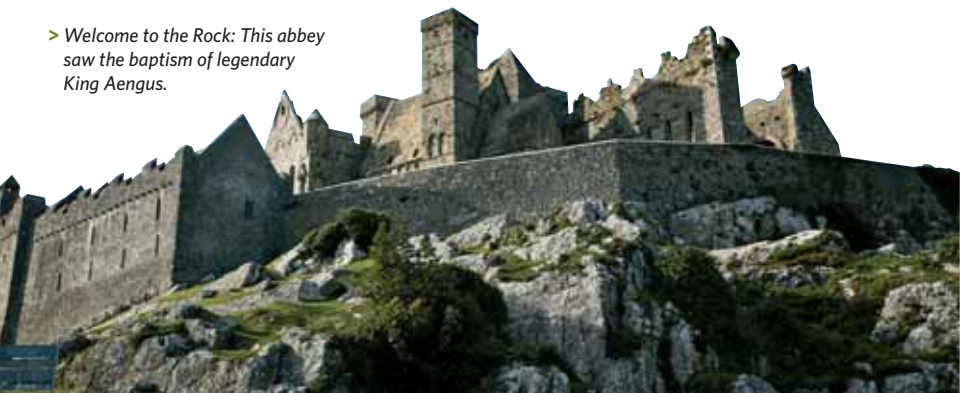
The Rock of Cashel (Co. Tipperary). When you're near the town of Cashel, the first thing you'll see is the extraordinary, dramatic outline of this craggy old abbey at the top of the hill at the town center. It dominates views for miles around. An outcrop of limestone reaching 60m (197 ft.) into the sky, "the Rock" tells 16 centuries' worth of tales. It was the castled seat of the kings of Munster at least as far back as A.D. 360, and it remained a royal fortress until 1101, when King Murtagh O'Brien granted it to the church. Among Cashel's many great moments was the

legendary baptism of King Aengus by St. Patrick in 448. Remaining on the Rock are the ruins of a two-towered chapel, a cruciform cathedral, a 28m (92-ft.) round tower, and a cluster of other medieval monuments. Inside the cathedral, ancient carvings survive in excellent condition. The views from the Rock are spectacular. Forty-five-minute guided tours are available on request. See map p 4, [7](#).

Skellig Michael (Co. Kerry). In the 6th century, Christian monks built a monastery on this rocky island 29km (18 miles) off the rocky southwest coast. There, in exquisite isolation, they eked out their livelihood and transcribed Western literature after the sack of Rome, salvaging the Great Books from the Dark Ages. Visitors reach the ruins of their church, oratory, and beehive huts by way of stone staircases that ramble up the seaside cliffs. It's now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. See map p 4, [13](#); see chapter 8, p 270.

Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery (Co. Sligo). This is one of the great sacred landscapes of the ancient world. At its center are a massive passage grave and a stone circle, surrounded by as many as 200 additional stone circles and passage graves arranged in an intricate and mysterious design. The site spreads out so far that many of the formations are in farms adjacent to the preserved cemetery. Look out for your first dolmen in a paddock next to the road about a mile before you reach the site. See map p 4, [17](#); see p 354, [2](#).

> *Welcome to the Rock: This abbey saw the baptism of legendary King Aengus.*



The Best Museums

Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. This breathtaking array of early illuminated gospels and religious manuscripts outshines the Book of Kells. Surprises abound here, from ancient editions of the Bible to beautiful copies of the Koran, Chinese jade books, and endless icons from Western, Middle Eastern, and Far Eastern cultures. Best of all: It's free, on the grounds of Dublin Castle. See map p 4, **21**; see p 66, **1**.

Dublin Writers Museum. This excellent little museum represents the best of what literary galleries can be, and lovers of Irish literature will find it hard to leave. The attraction is more than just seeing Joyce's typewriter or reading early playbills for the Abbey Theatre when Yeats helped to run it. This museum opens a window and sheds light onto Ireland's rich literary heritage, and it is wonderful to wander in that glow. See map p 4, **18**; see p 71, **3**.

Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition, Wexford (Co. Wexford). This living museum includes historic buildings that demonstrate the diverse activities of a pre-Industrial farm household, including recreations of a blacksmith's forge and several other farm craft workshops. The powerful Famine Exhibition examines the effects and causes of the potato famine within the broader context of Irish and European history. See map p 4, **5**; see p 145, **3**.

Ulster Museum, Belfast. This excellent museum encompasses 9,000 years of Irish history. Exhibits touch on art, furniture, ceramics, costume, and industrial heritage. One of the best-known displays is the gold and silver jewelry from the 1588 wreckage of the Armada treasure ship *Girona*. See map p 4, **2**; see p 380, **1**.

> *Ireland has produced four Nobel laureates in literature; browse through some of their artifacts at the Dublin Writers Museum.*



The Best Churches



➤ *St. Patrick's, the National Cathedral for the Church of Ireland, houses the country's largest ringing peal bells.*

St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. The national cathedral of the Church of Ireland dates from 1190, but religious activity on the site began in the 5th century, when St. Patrick performed baptisms in a nearby well (now marked by a well stone in the adjacent park). The cathedral that stands today is closely associated with the writer Jonathan Swift, who was dean from 1713 to 1745 and is buried here alongside his longtime partner, Stella. See map p 4, 23; see p 50, 1.

St. Michan's Church, Dublin. This 17th-century edifice has fine interior woodwork and an organ on which Handel debuted his *Messiah*. It's most famed for its crypt, in which bodies have lain for centuries without much decomposition because the atmosphere is so dry. It is said that Bram Stoker's childhood visits to the vaults helped inspire him to write *Dracula*. See map p 4, 19; see p 54, 1.

St. Anne's Church, Cork (Co. Cork). Also known as Shandon Church, St. Anne's is Cork City's predominant landmark, with its giant pepper-pot steeple, clock, and melodious bells. Built in 1722, the steeple has red sandstone and limestone walls, which inspired the colors of the Cork hurling and football teams. See map p 4, 9; see p 174, 1.

St. Mary's Cathedral, Killarney (Co. Kerry). Officially known as the Catholic Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, this limestone cathedral is designed in Gothic Revival style, in the shape of an elaborate Gothic cross. Like St. Michan's, it reputedly influenced Bram Stoker, who lived nearby and later wrote *Dracula*. See map p 4, 15; see p 234, 8.

The Best Castles



> It wouldn't be Ireland without a visit to a castle, and Lismore fits the bill with its dramatic turrets and local lore.

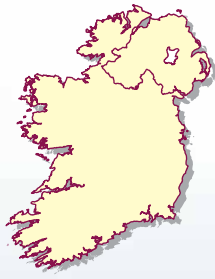
Kilkenny Castle (Co. Kilkenny). This 12th-century castle beside the River Nore was the principal seat of the Butler family, whose members were the earls, marquesses, and dukes of Ormonde. From its sturdy corner towers to its battlements, Kilkenny Castle retains the imposing lines of an authentic fortress and sets the tone for the city. The exquisitely restored interior includes a fine collection of Butler family portraits, some from as far back as the 14th century. See map p 4, **6**; see p 120, **1**.

Lismore Castle (Co. Waterford). This turreted castle from 1185 sits high above the River Blackwater. Local lore says that Lismore Castle was once granted to Sir Walter Raleigh for 12

Irish pounds a year, although he never occupied it. You're free to wander the 3,200-hectare (7,904-acre) estate of gardens, forests, and farmland, but not the castle itself, as it is the Irish home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire. See map p 4, **8**; see p 152, **2**.

Carrickfergus Castle (Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland). This huge castle with castellated walls presides over the entrance to Belfast Lough. Stone staircases climb the walls, affording lovely views of the sea. See map p 4, **1**; see p 410, **2**.





2

Strategies for Seeing Ireland



Strategies for Seeing Ireland

The pleasure of exploring Ireland will be immeasurably richer and more varied if you give yourself plenty of freedom along the way. We've gathered these suggestions, hard-won from our own experience, not to restrict you but to help you make the most of your travel time, energy, and budget while allowing for chance discoveries.

Tip #1: Consider traveling during shoulder season.

Spring and fall are our favorite times to visit Ireland—the roads are less crowded, museum lines shrink, and hotel prices drop, as do fares. It's only about 10 degrees cooler in May than in June, but you can save hundreds of dollars by traveling before the summer tourists descend. Likewise, the weather is still temperate in September, but travel is much less expensive compared to August. If money is an object, there's plenty you can do to make this trip more affordable. See p 36, "Free & Dirt Cheap Ireland," in chapter 3.

Tip #2: Don't worry too much about where you arrive.

Ireland is a small country, so you can traverse it with relative ease. For example, Belfast is just a couple of hours by car from Dublin Airport, and vice versa; Shannon Airport is just a couple of hours' drive from Kerry, and vice versa. Unless you have only a few days to travel, choose the cheapest and most direct flights to Ireland rather than a particular city in Ireland, and consider the drive to your first hotel a sightseeing excursion.

Tip #3: We highly recommend that you rent a car.

The rail system in Ireland is fine if you're going from one major city to another, but it's not useful if you want to explore villages, castles, and sights out in the countryside. Buses can help fill the gap, but in far-flung areas they are infrequent and unreliable. Despite the challenges to some visitors of driving on the left on narrow roads, cars will afford you the maximum freedom, and they're relatively inexpensive to rent. You can have a fine trip to Ireland without a car, but with a car you will experience more of the country.

Tip #4: However you travel, allow plenty of time to get from point A to point B.

Yes, Ireland is small—but the roads are to scale. Although the last decade has seen a virtual explosion in road construction, and some four-lane highways have been built, they are still relatively scant. Even highways marked as "major roads" in the middle of nowhere can prove to be little two-lane farm roads. In very remote areas, it's not uncommon to encounter single-lane roads where you have to pull over to let oncoming traffic pass. If you travel by public transportation, don't think





> **PAGE 19** A horse and cart pass a narrow coastal road on the Dingle Peninsula. **OPPOSITE** Irish-only sign in the Gaeltacht. **THIS PAGE** Sheep take the right of way.

you'll whiz to your destination that way either. Trains and buses are infrequent, especially in the countryside. Also, trains tend to follow the most heavily traveled routes. If you try to get from Killarney to Galway by train, you'll have to go by way of Dublin, on the opposite side of the country. Buses pick up some of the slack, but they must get through the same traffic and down the same roads as cars.

Tip #5: Decide whether to hotel-hop or stay in one place. Take advantage of the proximity of Irish towns by choosing a hub in each region and exploring the surrounding area from there. Park yourself in Kenmare, for instance, and from there you can easily visit the Ring of Kerry, Dingle, Killarney, and Tralee. Stay in Derry, and you can spend more time exploring the northern coastline, the Giant's Causeway, and the Glens of Antrim—and less time repacking, lugging bags to the car or train, and unpacking at yet another new hotel.

Tip #6: Visit the local pub. The heart and soul of villages and small towns, pubs in Ireland,

as in the U.K., are social gathering places, restaurants, music halls, and, in rural areas, post offices, shops, and civic meeting halls. There is no better place to meet locals and find out what their lives are like.

Tip #7: Don't forget the North. Don't leave Northern Ireland out of your itinerary, despite the fact that you are technically entering another country when you visit. It's one of Ireland's most affordable regions, it's safe, there are no checkpoints or manned borders to cross, and you don't need a separate visa. Just remember that the currency is the British pound, and road signs are in miles, not kilometers. **For more on Belfast and Northern Ireland, see chapters 12 and 13.**

Tip #8: Remember you are on vacation. If covered in full, many of the tours in this guide would result in long, tiring days. So pick and choose the destinations most important to you, and focus on those. Be selective if you'd rather linger over sights that mean something to you.





3

The Best All-Ireland Itineraries



The Best of Ireland in 1 Week

With a few long days and a savvy attitude, it is possible to see a sizable chunk of this Austria- or Indiana-sized island in just a week. This tour kicks off in Dublin, straight off the plane. Most flights from the U.S. arrive early in the morning, which effectively gives you a whole extra day if you touch down, check into your hotel, grab a map, and just start walking.



➤ *PREVIOUS PAGE* A winding country road in Northern Ireland. *THIS PAGE* The Greek and Italian-inspired gardens of Powerscourt House, designed by famed landscaper Daniel Robertson.

START **Dublin.** **TRIP LENGTH** 482km (300 miles).

➊ **Dublin.** Start your day in the Irish capital with a visit to **Dublin Castle** (p 52). The center of British rule in Ireland for more than 700 years, it's only moderately impressive as castles here go, but the grounds encompass the **Chester Beatty Library** (p 66)—one of our favorite small museums anywhere. On display you'll find a breathtaking array of early illuminated gospels, next to ancient editions of the Torah, Koran, and icons from Far Eastern cultures. Amazingly, it won't cost you a penny. A short walk down the hill delivers you to **St. Patrick's Cathedral** (p 50), whose grounds were consecrated by Ireland's patron saint himself in the 5th century. Most of what you can see dates from the 14th century, but religious buildings have occupied this site since

pre-Christian times. The **National Museum of Ireland** (p 56) is our favorite of the four museum sites that constitute this national institution. Highlights on display here include Viking artifacts from the excavations of early Dublin settlements, and a dazzling array of Celtic jewelry. Shoppers gravitate to **Grafton Street** (p 57), with its mix of high-end retailers, mom and pop shops, and industrious buskers. **Temple Bar** (p 57) is the capital's hippest neighborhood, whose streets are lined with modern art galleries, chic boutiques, and funky bars spilling over with bright young people. A walk over **Ha'penny Bridge** (p 53) takes you to some essential sites north of the Liffey, though the neighborhood is a little more down-at-the-heel than the south side. The **General Post Office** (p 53) on O'Connell Street is a virtual

- 1 Dublin
- 2 Glendalough
- 3 Enniskerry
- 4 Wexford Town & County Wexford
- 5 New Ross
- 6 Waterford
- 7 Kinsale
- 8 Killarney National Park & the Ring of Kerry



pilgrimage site for devotees of Irish history. A little farther up are two more exceptional museums: the **Dublin Writers Museum** (p 53), full of priceless mementos related to Ireland's literary heritage, and the **Hugh Lane Gallery** (p 53), a small art museum with a startlingly good collection of Impressionist and contemporary works. **Trinity College** (p 76) is, in more ways than one, the center of Dublin; wander around its beautiful grounds before walking over to **St. Stephen's Green** (p 57), a small urban park with an imaginative array of open-air art. ☀ 1 day. For more on Dublin, see chapter 4.

Leave Dublin on the R115 south. Turn right onto the R756 at Laragh and follow signs to Glendalough. 77km (48 miles).

2 Glendalough. The first stop out of Dublin is the monastic ruin at **Glendalough**, in County Wicklow near Bray. This perceptibly spiritual place is one of Europe's great early Christian sites, but it's best experienced very early or late in the day, to avoid the tour-bus crush. ☀ 2 hr. For more on Glendalough, see chapter 4, p 116.

Backtrack to Laragh. Then take the R755 northeast toward Enniskerry. 29km (18 miles).



> Celtic crosses still stand at Glendalough, though it was pillaged by both the Vikings and English.



> *Dublin's Ha'penny Bridge over the River Liffey got its nickname from the original half-pence toll to cross it.*

3 Enniskerry. Enniskerry is worth the trip about halfway back toward Dublin, for the sole reason that it's just too pretty to miss. Right outside Enniskerry (well signposted from the main roads), the **Powerscourt House and Gardens** (p 118) is a magnificent Palladian estate that took 30 years to restore after a devastating fire in 1974. From here it's a long walk or a short drive to **Powerscourt Waterfall**, the tallest waterfall in Ireland. ⌚ Half-day. For more on Co. Wicklow, see chapter 4, p 116.

Leave Enniskerry on the N11 south to Wexford Town. 112km (70 miles).

4 Wexford Town & County Wexford. With its long history of struggle and rebellion, County Wexford possesses an impressive clutch of museums and historical sites. Start with a whistle-stop tour of **Wexford Town** (p 140), and check out the **Heritage Tower** (p 140) and **Selskar Abbey**. Then make the 10-minute drive south to Jonestown Castle, which houses the excellent **Irish Agricultural Museum** (p 145). ⌚ Half-day. For more on Co. Wexford, see chapter 5.

From Wexford Town, take the N25 west to New Ross. 37km (23 miles).

5 New Ross. The medieval port town of **New Ross** is home to the impressive **SS Dunbrody** emigrant ship and the **JFK Trust Dunbrody** (p 146). Round out the day with a visit to **Tintern Abbey** (p 146), a 13th-century ruin with extraordinarily beautiful grounds. ⌚ 1 day. For more on New Ross, see p 146.

Leave New Ross on the N25 southwest to Waterford. 23km (14 miles).

6 Waterford. If you're traveling with kids, reward them for traipsing around ancient ruins with a visit to **Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum** (p 150)—it's educational, but they won't notice. Also take a quick look at **Reginald's Tower** and the **Holy Trinity Cathedrals** (p 149) *Note:* Sadly, the **Waterford Crystal Factory** recently closed, after years as the region's number-one visitor attraction. ⌚ 1 day. For more on Waterford, see chapter 5, p 149.

Head toward Cork on the N25. Then take the N27 and R600 south to Kinsale. 144km (89 miles).

7 Kinsale. To break up the long drive from Waterford, consider a brief detour to the **Mahon Falls** near Dungarvan (p 153), before spending the rest of the day in this dreamy little former fishing village. The **Kinsale Regional Museum, Charles Fort, and Desmond Castle** (p 186) are all worth a look. Kinsale is the unofficial gourmet capital of Ireland, full of outstanding restaurants and B&Bs. Don't even think about eating in tonight. ⌚ 1 day. For more on Kinsale, see chapter 6, p 186.

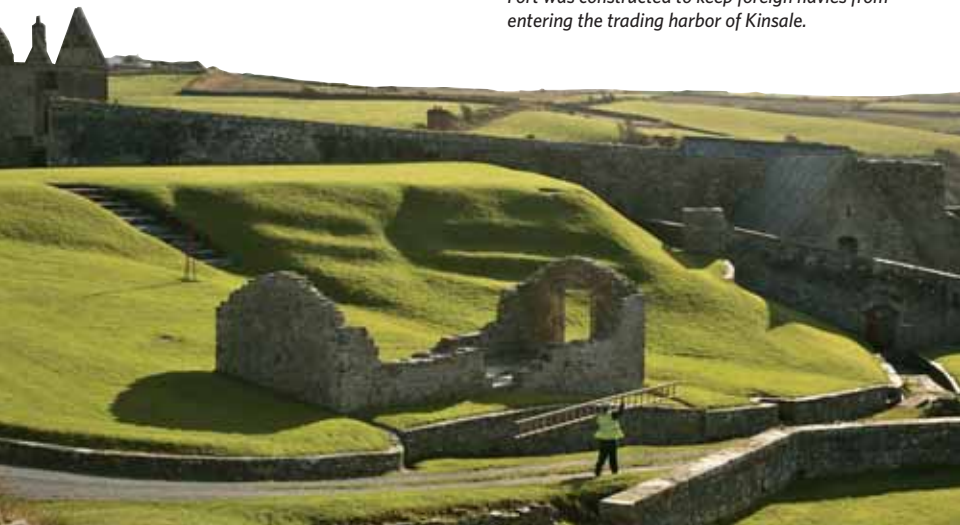
From Kinsale, take the R605 northeast, then the N22 to Killarney. 97km (60 miles).

8 Killarney National Park & the Ring of Kerry. Undoubtedly Ireland's most popular scenic drive, the **Ring of Kerry** is the name for the 170km (106-mile) highway that skirts the edges of the Iveragh Peninsula. Attempting the whole thing in 2 days would be taxing (you've probably spent enough time behind the wheel without having to fight for space with tour buses making this circuit, especially in high season), but you should be able to cover the first half comfortably. Start by spending at least a few hours in **Killarney National Park** (p 286), a 65sq. km (25-sq. miles) expanse of forests, lakes, and mountains where the ground is a soft carpet of moss and the air is fragrant with wildflowers. Busy **Killarney Town** (p 232) makes a good base for the night; from here, we suggest you follow the Ring northward, aiming to reach **Cahersiveen**. Along the way you'll pass through stunning landscapes and a host of impossibly gorgeous villages, such as **Killorglin** (p 256) and **Glenbeigh** (p 256), with its beautiful sandy beach. ☉ 2 days. For more on Killarney, see chapter 7; for the Ring of Kerry, see chapter 8, p 264.

To return to Dublin from Killarney, head northeast on the N72, N8, and M7. 299km (186 miles).



> **ABOVE** A seasoned “jarvey” driver at Killarney National Park. **BELOW** The star-shaped Charles Fort was constructed to keep foreign navies from entering the trading harbor of Kinsale.



The Best of Ireland in 2 Weeks

With a second week in Ireland, however, you can expand upon our Ireland in 1 Week route and leisurely take in some west coast highlights, including Skellig Michael, Céide Fields, medieval Galway City and the rugged Burren and Connemara national parks.



> Six hundred stone steps lead to the 6th-century monastic settlement on Skellig Michael.

START Valentia Island Ferry to Skellig Michael.

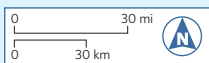
TRIP LENGTH 429km (267 miles).

1 Skellig Michael. Plenty remains to be seen on the hundred remaining miles of the Ring of Kerry, but unless you're willing to spend more time behind the wheel of a car on Irish roads, we don't recommend it; you'll miss out on too many other sites in the West. The Skelligs, however, are an essential detour. Reached via a 45-minute ferry ride from leafy **Valentia Island**, near Cahersiveen (which you can reach by road from the mainland; p 270), these two islands—Little Skellig and Skellig Michael—rise up from the choppy seas like hulking monoliths. Skellig Michael is the site of an exceptionally well-preserved 6th-century monastic complex. Sacked by the Vikings and subsequently rebuilt several times, it was finally abandoned in the 12th century—and has lain virtually untouched ever since. **Tip:** Skellig Michael is an unforgettable place, but the seas can be rough; devise a plan B in case crossings are cancelled due to bad weather. Our choice would be to explore a little farther down the Ring of Kerry, or spend the day in Dingle instead (p 278). ☹️ 1 day. For more on the Skelligs, see chapter 8, p 270.

From Cahersiveen, rejoin the N70 Ring of Kerry road northeast. Keep heading up the coast, past Tralee and Kilrush, crossing the N85 at Ennistimon. After Kilfenora, follow signs for the Burren Centre. 180km (112 miles).

2 The Burren National Park. The Burren began to acquire its strange, otherworldly appearance 300 million years ago when layers of shells and sediment were deposited under

- 1 Skellig Michael
- 2 The Burren National Park
- 3 Galway City
- 4 Connemara National Park
- 5 Westport & County Mayo
- 6 Sligo Town & County Sligo



ATLANTIC
OCEAN

Skellig Michael



a tropical sea. Many millions of years later, those layers were exposed by erosion and poor prehistoric farming methods, and since then, the Irish rain and winds have battered the landscape further, producing a desolate sweep of craggy limestone adorned by delicate ferns, moss, and wildflowers, including orchids. Start by exploring the **Burren National Park** (p 330); this is great walking territory, rich in archaeological remains and unusual wildlife. A number of hiking trails follow the route of old, famine-era “green roads” (see p 288). **Corcomroe Abbey** (p 333) is well worth the mile-long walk there from the car park. The area known as the Burren extends farther than the national park and encompasses a



➤ Medieval and Romanesque stone carvings decorate the ruins of Corcomroe Abbey.



> Corcomroe Abbey was founded in 1194 by a king of Thomond whose grandson is entombed in the northern wall.

smattering of winsome villages and places to stay. **Ballyvaughan** (p 321), on Galway Bay, makes a good base for exploring the region. **Lisdoonvarna** (p 333), an eccentric, whimsical spa town with natural springs, is worth a visit if only so you can say you've been there. ☹️ 2 days. For more on the Burren, see chapter 10, p 330.

Head farther up the coast on the N67. Turn left onto the N18, following signs to Galway. 63km (39 miles).

3 Galway City. This compact, sophisticated city is Ireland's unofficial capital of culture. It's also rich shopping territory, lined with small boutiques and funky coffee shops. Wander around the **Medieval Quarter** and through **Eyre Square** (p 296) before getting a brief fix of literary history at the **Nora Barnacle House** (p 298). You could while away a whole day here, but those itching to see more of the countryside will probably prefer to spend the afternoon on the **Aran Islands** (p 300), a



➤ *With fewer men in tights and more funky art galleries, Galway's Medieval Quarter today is a cultural and shopping destination.*

short ferry hop from Galway Dock. There are two excellent arts venues in Galway City, the **Galway Arts Centre** and the **Druid Theatre** (p 314); it's usually worth checking out what's on before you arrive. ☹ 1 day. For more on Galway City, see chapter 9.

Leave Galway on the N59 northwest. Turn right onto the R344 at Lissoughter, and loop around the National Park to Kylemore. 84km (52 miles).

❹ **Connemara National Park.** Like the Burren, Connemara isn't an area with clearly defined boundaries. Yet, as the distant hills start to look taller, the lakes glassier, and the boggy plains streaky with the tender scars of fresh-cut peat, you'll know when you've arrived. Central to the region is the 2,000-hectare (4,940-acre) **Connemara National Park** (p 328), which has an excellent visitor center in Letterfrack. Here you'll find a mine of information about the park's several walking paths, mountain ranges, scenic drives, and beauty spots. As a region, Connemara is more populous than the Burren; among its slightly more sizable towns is the amiable seaside resort of **Clifden** (p 323). On your drive up to Connemara from Galway City, don't miss the Gothic lakeside **Kylemore Abbey** (p 326)—it's about as irresistible-looking a pit stop as we can imagine, with a restaurant and Victorian walled garden on-site. ☹ 1 day. For more on Connemara National Park, see chapter 10, p 328.

Take the N59 northeast to Westport. 43km (26 miles).

❺ **Westport & County Mayo.** We're veering from the oft-trod path here, and it's well worth the venture. **Westport** (p 358) is County Mayo's loveliest town, and it's easy to explore in a couple of hours. An incredible pair of ecclesiastical ruins lie just outside **Ballina** (p 366), about an hour's drive northeast of Westport. From there you'll drive up to the Stone Age village of **Céide Fields** (p 345), one of Ireland's major prehistoric sites, hundreds of feet above the sea on a chalk cliff. ☹ 1 day. For more on Co. Mayo, see chapter 11.

Stay on the N59 northeast to Sligo Town. 60km (37 miles).

❻ **Sligo Town & County Sligo.** Sligo's most celebrated son was the Nobel laureate poet W. B. Yeats, and you'll happen upon sites associated with him almost everywhere you go in these parts. In **Sligo Town**, the **Yeats Memorial Building** is a short walk from the informative **Sligo County Museum** and **Sligo Abbey** (p 345). Outside town, **Drumcliff** and **Lough Gill** (p 345) will be meaningful to Yeats fans—though you don't have to be a poetry lover to appreciate the gentle landscape of this bucolic county. ☹ 1 day. For more on Co. Sligo, see chapter 11.

To return to Dublin, take the N4 southeast. Set out early if you've got a plane to catch. 206km (128 miles).

Ireland Off the Beaten Track

We start this tour in Belfast—a city in the midst of an immense transformation since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement that finally established a *détente* in Northern Ireland. Tourism has yet to arrive en masse to the region, including its modern capital, after decades of sectarian strife and terrorism. If the best sites of the Antrim Coast were in County Cork or Kerry, they'd be overrun with tourists; as it is, one can still visit a spectacular setting such as the Giant's Causeway and find oneself alone with nature. This tour then heads west to some of Sligo's lesser-known archaeological sites and continues south for some blustery island-hopping off the coast of County Mayo.



> *The Giant's Causeway, a breathtaking natural rock formation in Northern Ireland, is a World Heritage Site.*

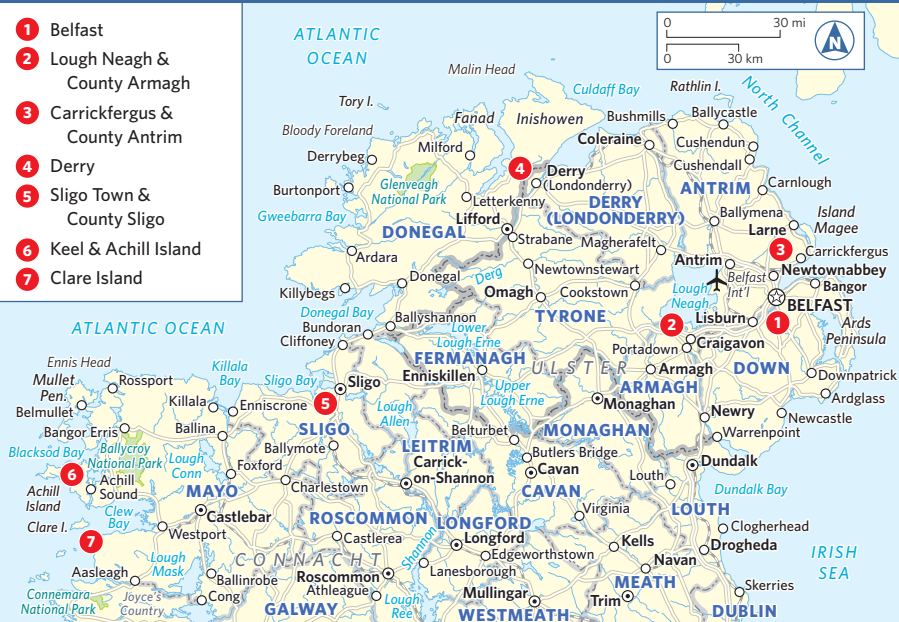
START Belfast. TRIP LENGTH 561km (349 miles).

1 Belfast. Now is an extraordinary time to visit this capital city of more than a quarter million people on the North Channel. Start with a visit to the **Ulster Museum** (p 380) and experience some of the city's more recent past firsthand with a **Black Taxi Tour** (p 386) of the area around the Shankill and Falls roads. Then immerse yourself in the city's more modern, vibrant present by exploring its busy shopping districts, or take a walking tour of **Queen's University** (p 381). The **Belfast Botanic Gardens** (p 381) and **Belfast Castle** (p 390) are also worth a look; if you're visiting the latter, make time to explore the adjoining **Cave Hill Country Park** (p 393). Historically speaking, the words "Belfast" and "great food" haven't been seen together very often, but that's changing now too; be sure to check out one of the city's small but growing number of world-class restaurants. ⌚ 1 day. For more on Belfast, see chapter 12.

From Belfast, take the M1 southwest to Craigavon. 47km (29 miles).

2 Lough Neagh & County Armagh. Start getting acquainted with the wild and beautiful Northern Irish countryside by heading southwest out of Belfast into County Armagh. The **Lough Neagh Discovery Centre** (p 450) near Craigavon has a vast nature reserve and meadows blooming with wildflowers. Then head over to the Iron Age burial mound

- 1 Belfast
- 2 Lough Neagh & County Armagh
- 3 Carrickfergus & County Antrim
- 4 Derry
- 5 Sligo Town & County Sligo
- 6 Keel & Achill Island
- 7 Clare Island



> Belfast's Black Taxi drivers are among the best tour guides the city has to offer.



> *One of the great sacred landscapes of the ancient world, Carrowmore encompasses more than 60 stone circles and passage graves.*

at **Navan Fort** (p 439). ☉ 1 day. For more on Armagh, see chapter 13, p 422.

Retrace the route to Belfast, looping around the city. Then take the A2 up to Carrickfergus. 83km (52 miles).

3 Carrickfergus & County Antrim. One of the North's loveliest counties, Antrim is home to two gorgeous parks: the **Castlewellan Forest Park** (p 449), with its formal gardens and gorgeous woodland walks, and the **Silent Valley Mountain Park** (p 449), which has beautiful walks and even more incredible views. The Antrim coast road is one of Ireland's great coastal drives—and also one of its least spoiled. Few tourists ever venture this far north; those who do will reap spectacular rewards. Start in **Carrickfergus** (p 410), heading toward **Whitepark Bay** (p 427). For the best views take the **Torr Head Scenic Road** (p 427), an alternative, signposted road parallel to the main route—but only if you've a good head for heights. From up here on a clear day, you can see all the way to the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland. The Antrim coast's most remarkable asset is the **Giant's Causeway** (p 428), an uncanny natural rock formation comprised of thousands of tightly packed basalt columns. ☉ 2 days. For more on Antrim, see chapter 13, p 426.

Join the A37 southwest to Derry. 64km (40 miles).

4 Derry. Straddling the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, this vibrant town was, for years, synonymous with political strife. Though it's peaceful these days, it's still a divided place—the residents can't even agree on what to call it, in fact. Road signs from the Republic point to Derry; those in the North point to Londonderry. How can a place like that not be full of character and history? Check out the award-winning **Tower Museum** (p 434) and the Gothic, 17th-century **Cathedral of St. Columb** (p 433) before recharging for a long drive in the afternoon. ☉ Half-day. For more on Derry, see chapter 13, p 432.

Leave Derry on the N13. Then take the N15 coast road southwest to Sligo Town. 138km (86 miles).

5 Sligo Town & County Sligo. Nestled within the gentle, verdant hills of this underrated county are some dramatic archaeological sites. Within a short drive from Sligo Town are two of the most incredible: **Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery** (p 354), with its 14 cairns, dolmens, and stone circles, and the impossibly ancient **Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery** (p 354). Here's a thought to ponder while clambering around the latter: The innocuously named tomb 52A is thought to be 7,400 years old, making it the earliest known piece of free-standing stone



> *The waves of the Atlantic crash around the rocky cliffs of Achill Island, making it a great spot for (advanced) windsurfers.*

architecture in the world. ☉ Half-day. For more on Co. Sligo, see chapter 11.

From Sligo Town, take the N17 and N5 to Castlebar, then the R311 to Newport. Continue on the N59 to Mullaranny. Then take the R319 over the road bridge to Achill Island. Keel is 15km (9½ miles) on that road. 149km (93 miles).

6 Keel & Achill Island. This is a wild and beautiful place of unspoiled beaches and spectacular scenery, with a handful of excellent little hotels and B&Bs, mostly in the vicinity of Keel, the island's most attractive village. This is also major outdoor sports territory, as the constant wind off the Atlantic Ocean is ideal for wind-surfing, hang gliding, and any other sport that depends on a breeze. Our favorite discovery on Achill Island is a deserted village on the slopes of Mount Slievemore. Not too many people venture up there, which makes it that much more of an extraordinary and moving place to visit. ☉ 1 day. For more on Achill Island, see chapter 11, p 364.

On the mainland, take the N59 to Westport, then the R335 to Roonagh. Catch a ferry to Clare Island. 58km (36 miles).

7 Clare Island. Another little-visited island enclave, Clare Island is even more peaceful

and isolated than its near neighbor, Achill. The permanent population amounts to just 150 people, and you can go a long way without bumping into any of them. ☉ 1 day. For more on Clare Island, see chapter 11, p 360.

To return to Belfast from Roonagh Quay, take the R335 to Westport, then the N5 and N17 northeast to Collooney. Loop around Sligo or cut across to Manorhamilton. Then take the N16 to Enniskillen and join the A4, which becomes the M1, to Belfast. 324km (201 miles).

Northern Exposure

Northern Ireland comprises Counties Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. Although it remains part of the U.K., politically separate from the rest of Ireland, you'll notice little difference in practical terms. There are no checkpoints and few defined borders, and you don't need a passport or visa if you're entering from the Republic. There are, however, two key differences from the Republic: Road signs are in miles, and the currency is the British pound (though shops in border areas occasionally accept euros as payment).

Free & Dirt Cheap Ireland

Let's admit something here: Ireland is no longer a cheap country to visit. Even before the global economic crisis of 2008 and 2009, hotels and restaurants tended to be expensive. Fortunately, some of the best things in Ireland are free, and you'll be surprised to see how much you can experience without blowing your budget. You can save even more money by sticking to destinations accessible via public transport.

START **Belfast Central Station.**

1 Belfast. Belfast is rich with free attractions. The excellent **Ulster Museum** (p 380) displays artifacts from across 9,000 years of Irish history. Exhibitions also explore Belfast and the capital's more recent industrial past. Right next door is the **Belfast Botanic Gardens & Palm House** (p 381), which in turn is a short walk from the campus of **Queen's University** (p 381). **Belfast City Hall** (p 382) runs free guided tours, while the city's old Victorian swimming baths now house the **Ormeau Baths Gallery** (p 382), the region's principal exhibition space for contemporary visual art. Another exceptional Victorian landmark, **Belfast Castle** (p 390), is also free; the adjoining **Cave Hill Country Park** (p 391) is a tranquil place with good walking trails and incredible views of the city.

> *It doesn't cost a thing to wander the Falls and Shankill roads neighborhoods of Belfast.*

Last but not least, Belfast is still most famous for the violence and hardship it endured in the mid- to late-20th century. The epicenter of the conflict was the **Falls and Shankill roads area** (p 386). Political murals are still a salient feature of these neighborhoods, though they are now safe for visitors to explore. ☺ 2 days. For more on Belfast, see chapter 12.

Catch a train from Belfast to Dublin (Connolly Station). Time: 2hr. 10 min. Off-peak: adults €38, children €19.





2 Dublin. Ireland's capital is also the number-one destination in the country for free sites. The **Chester Beatty Library** (p 66) is, even for our money, one of the best museums in Ireland. The collection of illuminated gospels and early copies of the Bible, Torah, and Koran would justify a steep entrance fee, but it won't cost you a cent. Two of the four separate museums constituting the **National Museum of Ireland** are in Dublin, and both are free. The main collection on **Kildare Street** contains some of Ireland's greatest archaeological treasures, including a huge horde of Celtic gold. The restored **Collins Barracks** (p 61) houses the museum's collection of decorative arts. (The **Natural History Museum** on Merrion St. is also part of the National Museum, but at press time it was closed for renovation until further notice.) All of Dublin's best major art galleries are free. The collection at the **National Gallery of Ireland**, though relatively small, includes works by Titian, Vermeer, Monet, and Picasso. Also free are the **Irish Museum of Modern Art**, the **Temple Bar Gallery & Studios** (p 80), the **National Photographic Archive**, and the excellent **Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane** (p 53). Many of Dublin's most historic public buildings don't charge admission. **Áras an Uachtaráin** (the Irish President's House;



> Besides the usual Masters, check out the room dedicated to Jack B. Yeats, brother of W. B., at Ireland's National Gallery.



> *Ross Castle, on Killarney National Park's Lower Lake, was one of the last strongholds to surrender to Oliver Cromwell's forces in 1652.*

Tip

For more information on train and bus timetables, see www.irishrail.ie and www.buseireann.ie.

p 60) is accessible only by tour on a first-come, first-served basis; the queue forms at the visitor center in Phoenix Park. The **Bank of Ireland/Parliament House** (p 55) and the **Four Courts** (p 54) are also free; **Leinster House** (p 56) is free, but open by appointment only; while **Custom House** (p 58) charges just €1.50 to enter its visitor center. The **General Post Office** on O'Connell Street (p 53) is still a working post office but has a small number of exhibits devoted to the Easter Rising, including the original Declaration of Independence. Add to this the great public spaces such as **Phoenix Park** (p 59), **St. Stephen's Green** (p 57), and **Trinity College** (p 76), and you'll see it's possible to spend a full 2 days here without spending a penny on sightseeing. ☹ 2 days. For more on Dublin, see chapter 4.

Catch a train from Dublin (Heuston Station) to Galway. Time: 2hr. 40 min. Off-peak: adults €24, children €12.

③ **Galway.** Ireland's unofficial capital of culture affords plenty of free pursuits. The **Galway Arts Centre** (p 297) usually has good exhibitions, and you can often score cheap tickets for performances. The **Galway City Museum** (p 297) makes for a good introduction to the region, with its fine collection of artifacts from the medieval period onward. **St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church**, the oldest church in the city, contains a 12th-century crusader's tomb, among other extraordinary historic pieces. Guided tours are excellent and free (though they should be booked in advance). A little way out of town, the **Galway Irish Crystal Centre** (p 298) is an absorbing factory-cum-artisan shop, where you can observe the craftsmen at work on some of the country's trademark crystal creations. It's a great place to offload a little of that money you're saving. ⌚ 1 day. For more on Galway City, see chapter 9.

Catch a bus from Galway Bus Station to Cork (Parnell Place Bus Station). Time: 4hr. 20 min. Off-peak: adults €15, children €12.

4 Cork City. County Cork is largely bereft of free sites—in fact, we haven't included any outside Cork City in this book. No matter, because there's enough to do in this distinctive, bustling county seat to keep you busy for at least a full day. Start with a trip to the **Old English Market** (p 178), before heading to the **Cork Public Museum** (p 177) for an overview of Cork's long and often tumultuous history. Like Dublin, Cork has a couple of first-rate art museums, and most are free. The **Lavit Gallery** showcases work from up-and-coming contemporary artists from the region, while the **Crawford Municipal Art Gallery** (p 177) is quite simply one of the best in the country. The **Mutton Lane Mural** (p 178) is a more modest attraction—but one of the best photo opportunities in the city. ☹ 1 day. For more on Cork, see chapter 6.

Catch a train from Cork to Killarney, changing trains at Mallow. Time: 3hr. 30 min. Off-peak: adults €24, children €12.

5 Killarney. It's not exactly difficult to reach **Killarney National Park** (p 286) from town; you just walk toward the cathedral and turn left. This 65sq. km (25-sq. mile) expanse of forest, lakes, and mountains is crisscrossed with

Money-Saving Rail & Bus Passes

In the Irish Republic, the Eurail Pass is good for travel on trains, Expressway coaches, and the Irish Continental Lines ferries between France and Ireland. For further details or for purchase, call **Rail Pass Express** (☎ 800/722-7151). It's also available from **STA Travel** (☎ 800/781-4040; www.sta.com) and other travel agents. You can also find more information online at www.eurail.com.

BritRail Pass + Ireland: Includes all rail travel throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, including a round-trip ferry crossing on Stena Line. Available from **BritRail** (☎ 866/BRITRAIL 274-8724; www.britrail.com).

several well-conceived nature trails, plus more challenging routes for serious hikers. Formerly the grounds of a great mansion, the **Knockreer Estate** (p 236) still has lovely gardens and beautiful views. Free sites in Killarney Town itself include the rather grand neo-Gothic **St. Mary's Cathedral** (p 234). ☹ 1 day. For more on Killarney, see chapter 7.

To return to Dublin from Killarney, catch a train to Mallow, and then change trains for Dublin (Heuston Station). Time: 3hr. 30 min. Off-peak: adults €20, children €10.

➤ *Dublin's General Post Office is still riddled with bullet holes from the Easter Uprising of 1916.*



Ireland with Kids

As a general rule, the Irish counties with the highest visitor numbers tend to have the most attractions targeting young ones—with the notable exception of Dublin, which has a relative dearth of kid-oriented activity. In County Kerry, the biggest attractions usually involve wildlife in one form or another—from Fungie the Dolphin tours in Dingle, to seal-watching trips in Kenmare Bay, to pony rides around Killarney National Park. Blarney Castle, Bunratty Folk Park, or the Dunluce Centre will likely appeal to kids more than grown-ups, but the Donkey Sanctuary in Liscarroll, County Cork, is as touching to parents as to their children.



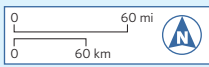
➤ *The Hayfield Manor Hotel in Cork offers special programs for its youngest guests—and cookies and milk at bedtime.*

START **Dublin.** **TRIP LENGTH** 1,093km (679 miles).

1 Dublin. The sprawling greens of **Phoenix Park** (p 59) are a great place for little ones to let off steam (it's the best place in the city for a picnic too, if the weather's good). Within the park, **Dublin Zoo** (p 60) is thoughtfully designed to cater to the younger ones (you can take a train ride around the zoo, for instance). Older children might be interested in the **Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum** (p 68), and they are all but guaranteed to love the **Dublin Ghost Bus** (p 61)—but that one's for big kids only. ☉ 2 days. For more on Dublin, see chapter 4.

Take the M50 loop around south Dublin. Then join the N11 south to Wexford Town. 138km (86 miles).

2 Wexford Town & County Wexford. History comes to life through the guides at the **Irish National Heritage Park** near Wexford Town (p 158). A kind of living-history trail, it traces what it was like to live in Ireland from the Stone Age to medieval times. A more somber, but similarly accessible, take on an important period in Irish history can be found at the **National 1798 Visitor Centre** (p 158) at Enniscorthy, a few miles north of the city. After all that learning, kids will no doubt have a whale of a time letting off steam at **Pirate's Cove** in Courtown Harbour (p 161), a complex of indoor amusements, including minigolf



ATLANTIC OCEAN

CELTIC SEA



- 1 Dublin
- 2 Wexford Town & County Wexford
- 3 Cork & County Cork
- 4 Dingle & County Kerry
- 5 Bunratty Folk Park
- 6 Letterfrack & Connemara National Park
- 7 Westport & County Mayo
- 8 Bushmills & County Antrim
- 9 Belfast

and bowling. ⌚ 1 day. For more on Wexford, see chapter 5.

From Wexford Town, take the N25 east through Waterford and on to Cork City. 179km (111 miles).

3 Cork & County Cork. Okay, so it's not exactly untouched by the tourism fairy, but kids find plenty to love about **Blarney Castle** (p 179), just outside Cork City. They can kiss the famous stone if they don't mind an attendant holding them upside down. A few miles away, the **Fota Wildlife Park** is a well-designed zoo where the docile animals (those that don't bite, kick, or stomp) roam among the visitors. For more up-close-and-personal contact with animals, visit the **Donkey Sanctuary** (p 201) in the small town of Liscarroll. ⌚ 1 day. For more on County Cork, see chapter 6.

Take the N22 northwest, joining the N70 at Killarney. Turn right onto the N70 at Killorglin. Then take the R561 coast road west toward Dingle. 161km (100 miles).

4 Dingle & County Kerry. Kerry may be Ireland's most kid-friendly county. Several of the region's top attractions involve encounters with sea creatures of one kind or another.



➤ A young visitor has a moment with Wimble the donkey at the Donkey Sanctuary.



> An actor plays the part of a 19th-century constable at Bunratty Folk Park.



> The stars of Seafari's seal-watching cruise in Kenmare Bay.

Fungie the Dingle Dolphin (p 286) has been entertaining kids and grown-ups alike for the last quarter-century, and children can view other residents of the deep across the street at the **Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium** (p 279). In Kenmare, **Seafari eco-nature cruises and seal-watching trips** (p 275) teach kids about conservation issues by putting them in touch with the underwater residents of Kenmare Bay. More educational fun is to be had in Tralee, at **Kerry the Kingdom** (p 286)—a visitor center that doesn't actually bore kids to tears. Afterward, you can hop on a restored **steam train** from **Tralee** to nearby **Blennerville** (p 286). More encounters with the animal kingdom are to be had at **Kennedy's Pet Farm**, near Killarney (p 284). While you're at it, you could take a ride around **Killarney National Park** (chapter 7) in a horse-drawn buggy. ☉ 2 days. For more on County Kerry, see chapter 8.

From Dingle, take the N68 to Tralee, then the N21 toward Limerick, circling around the **Burren National Park**. At Limerick, join the N18 toward Shannon and follow signs for Bunratty. 172km (107 miles).

5 Bunratty Folk Park. Not far from Shannon Airport, the **Bunratty Castle & Folk Park** (p 336) combines an exceptionally complete medieval castle with an extensive re-creation of a 19th-century Irish village, complete with working shops. It's also the setting for a lively and family-friendly medieval banquet in the evening. ☉ Half-day.

Take the N18 to Galway, then the N59 northwest. At Lissoughter, turn right onto the R344, rejoining the N59 loop at the top of the **Connemara National Park**. Take the N59 west to the visitor center at Letterfrack. 168km (104 miles).

6 Letterfrack & Connemara National Park. A number of riding schools in the area offer pony treks to various destinations within this famously beautiful stretch of the Irish countryside. ☉ Half-day. For more information see chapter 10, p 326.

From Letterfrack, take the N59 northeast to Westport. 52km (32 miles).

7 Westport & County Mayo. Grace O'Malley, the Pirate Queen, plied her trade in these parts



> *Pony trekking lets families explore the rugged beauty of Connemara from the comfort of a saddle.*

during the 16th and 17th centuries. One of Grace's descendants has turned the grounds of **Westport House** (p 358) into a virtual theme park, complete with a zoo and a log ride. If your kids want to learn more about Grace herself, check out the **Granuaile Visitor Centre** devoted to her in Louisburgh (p 370). In October the Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar hosts the annual weeklong **RoolaBoola Children's Arts Festival** (p 371). ☹ 1 day.

Continue northeast to Sligo Town. Then take the N15 and N13 to Derry. From here, take the A2, A37, then B17 northwest to Bushmills. 301km (187 miles).

8 Bushmills & County Antrim. The **Dunluce Centre** (p 445) is the sort of place that rainy days were made for, with its "Myths & Legends" multimedia show and a variety of other hands-on activities. While you're in the neighborhood, the **Giant's Causeway** (p 428) will fascinate kids as much as it does adults, although steep cliffs and sudden drops mean that you'll have to keep tabs on the youngest. A short drive away in Cushendall, your little ones will work off all their pent-up energy at the **Ardclinis Activity Centre** (p 444), which fea-

tures half-day to weeklong courses on a variety of sports, from rock climbing to windsurfing. ☹ 1 day.

If you've got time, take the A2 coast road from Bushmills to Belfast. The quicker route is the B17 and the B62 southeast to the A26 highway. Then join the M2 outside Antrim and head southeast. 58km (36 miles).

9 Belfast. Unlikely as it sounds, Belfast is set up well for families. **Belfast Zoo** (p 390) and the adjoining **Cave Hill Country Park** (p 391) will keep kids entertained for a full day. The **Odyssey Complex** (p 384) is an enormous hands-on science center, complete with IMAX cinema and video game arcade. For something a little less hyperactive, check out the **Castle Espie** wildlife center (p 391), just south of Belfast, which allows kids to get up close and personal with a variety of ducks, geese, and swans. A few miles north of Belfast, on the northern shore of Belfast Lough, is **Carrickfergus Castle** (p 410), which should impress even the most history-shy small children. ☹ 1 day.

To return to Dublin from Belfast, take the M1 south. 166km (103 miles).

Ancient Ireland

The various peoples who have claimed, conquered, or inhabited Ireland over the past 10 millennia have all left their mark in one way or another. From extraordinary megalithic tombs to early Christian monasteries, uncanny ancient sites riddle the Irish landscape. The wealth of artifacts is vast and unquantified; in some parts it's common to spot dolmens or other prehistoric structures in a field or on the roadside, unfenced and unprotected, with no one around to fuss over them. This can lead to extraordinary and unexpected discoveries. Beware, however, that many unheralded sites are on private land, and rural property owners generally don't take well to trespassers.

START **Newgrange.** **TRIP LENGTH** **427km (265 miles).**

1 Glendalough & County Wicklow. The misty 5th-century monastic ruins of Glendalough, built around two dark lakes and surrounded by forest, are an emblem of Ireland's early Christian heritage. Given its proximity to Dublin and Wicklow, this evocative site attracts visitors in droves, so we visit very early or late in the day. **St. Kevin's Way** (p 117) is a 1,000-year-old pilgrim path that runs between Glendalough and Hollywood, about 30km (19 miles) away. The route winds through roads, forest paths, and open mountainside, taking in many of the historical sites associated with St. Kevin, who traveled this way in search of a mountain hermitage. ☉ 1 day.

From Glendalough, take the R755 northeast. Then loop around Dublin on the M11 and M50. Keep heading north on the M1. Then turn left onto the N51 at Drybridge and follow signs to Newgrange. The turn is on the left after Rossin. 121km (75 miles).

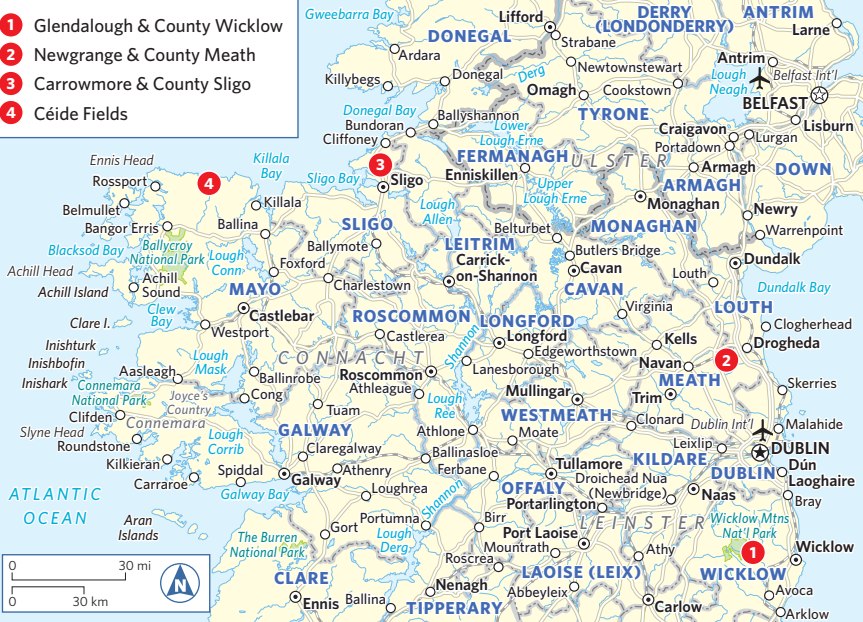
> *Excavation is almost constant at Knowth's impressive Stone Age burial ground.*

2 Newgrange & County Meath. This relatively unassuming county, just north of Dublin, contains more than its fair share of exceptional ancient sites. **Newgrange** (p 125) is one of Western Europe's great archaeological wonders under UNESCO protection. **Knowth** (p 124) contains the largest passage tombs yet discovered in Ireland. The 30 megalithic tombs at **Loughcrew**, also known as *Slieve na Calliaghe* or "The Hill of the Witch," crown three hilltops in the western part of the county. And burial sites dating all the way back to the Stone Age have been found at the **Hill of Tara** (p 127), which later became an important meeting place for the high kings of Ireland. ☉ 1 day.

From the Hill of Tara, take the road south until you get to Springvalley, near Summerhill. From here, take the R158 south. Then join the M4 east, which becomes the N4. Take it to Ballysadare. Then turn left onto the R292 and follow signs for Carrowmore. 200km (124 miles).



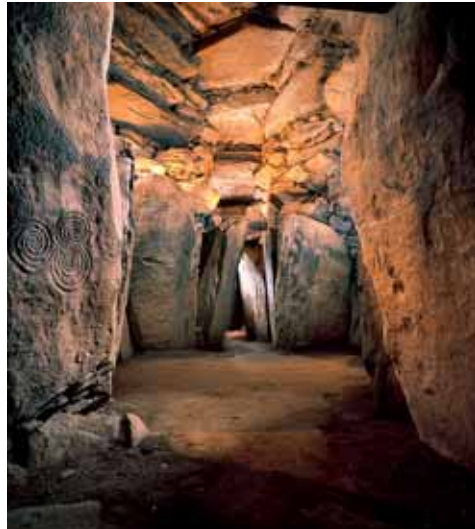
- 1 Glendalough & County Wicklow
- 2 Newgrange & County Meath
- 3 Carrowmore & County Sligo
- 4 Céide Fields



3 Carrowmore & County Sligo. County Sligo claims three major ancient burial grounds. **Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery** (p 354) once had around 200 separate stone circles and passage graves. More than 60 survive, including the innocuously named 52A. Excavated as recently as 1998, it is thought to be 7,400 years old, making it one of the oldest known pieces of free-standing architecture in the world. From Carrowmore, you can see the hilltop cairn grave of **Knocknarea**. Local legend has it that this is the grave of the “fairy queen” Maeve (see p 362). Overlooking Lough Arrow, in relative isolation, the **Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery** (p 354) contains 14 cairns, dolmens, and stone circles from around 5,000 B.C. ☀ 1 day.

Backtrack toward Ballysadare; then take the N59 southwest. At Ballina take the R314 to the coast and follow signs for Céide Fields. 106km (66 miles).

4 Céide Fields. Atop chalk cliffs overlooking the Atlantic hundreds of feet below, Neolithic farmers lived, worked the land, and buried their dead at Céide Fields, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The traces of this prehistoric civilization lay preserved in a peat bog until the 1930s. ☀ Half-day. See p 345.



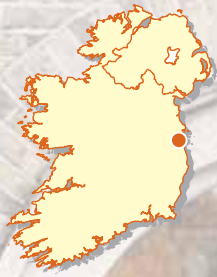
> The central burial chamber at Newgrange is dark all but five days of the year, at the winter solstice.

To return to Dublin, backtrack to Ballina and take the N26 south to Dublin; it changes names along the way (the N5, N4, and M4), but stay your course to Dublin. 269km (167 miles).

84

4111
FIVE ALLEY
LEWIS





4

Dublin & the Best Day Trips



Favorite Moments in Dublin

Despite its stony gray appearance, the Irish capital is one of Europe's most youthful and rapidly changing cities. Half the city proper's 500,000 residents are under 25, and the 1.5 million in greater Dublin constitute a third of Ireland's entire population. Dublin's oldest landmarks remain among its most interesting, but they're enlivened now by a new wealth of modern attractions: Edgy bars and cafes buzz alongside old pubs that have stood for centuries, and chic boutiques are snuggled into the medieval precincts of Cow's Lane. It's yours to discover afresh—even if you think you know what to expect.

Exploring the General Post Office. Dublin's humble, working post office has tremendous historic and political significance. Run your fingers over the bullet holes in its classical pillars—scars from the GPO's role as a rallying point during the Easter Rising and subsequent civil war—and feel for yourself the Irish struggle for independence. See p 53.

Discovering the illuminated manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Library. With its treasure-trove of ancient handwritten and painted religious books and documents, this extraordinary museum houses a significant chunk of world history. See p 66.

Shopping on Cow's Lane. This little street in the medieval district is on the cutting edge of Irish fashion and design. Its tiny boutiques hold the works of the city's best designers; it's an adventure to explore. See p 81.

Spending the day at Glendalough. In the off season, a hike through this peaceful, exquisite glen surrounded by towering woods and dotted with glassy lakes is good for your soul, just an easy day trip from the capital. You can see why St. Kevin chose the site for a religious settlement. See p 116.

Spending the night at the Clarence. This is our dream hotel—where simple comfort meets elegant, unpretentious style. Rooms are spacious, beds are perfect, bathrooms are filled with goodies, and there's a great bar downstairs. See p 104.

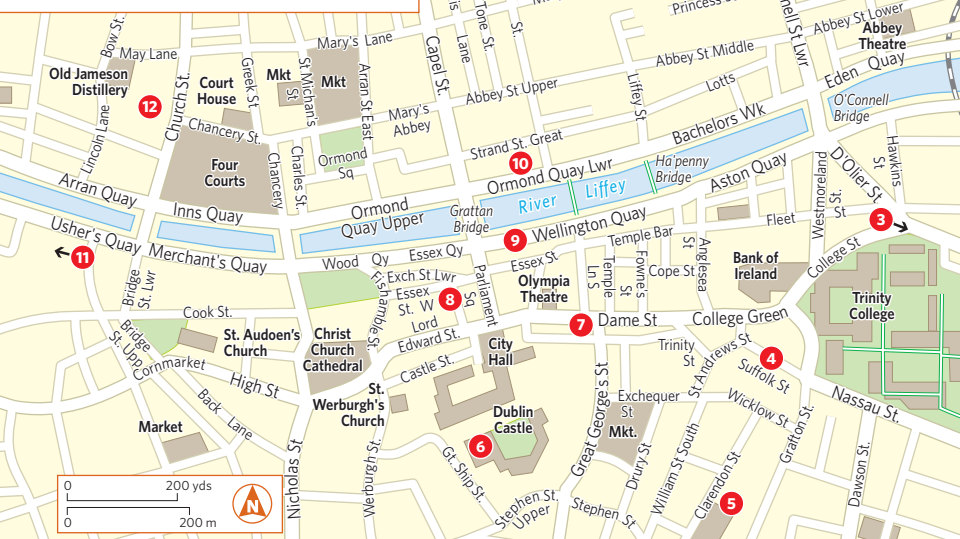


> *PREVIOUS PAGE* Merrion Square is famous for its Georgian doorways. *THIS PAGE* McDaid's still has a literary feel and a reputation for a perfect pint.

Romantic dinner at the Winding Stair. This revamped restaurant tucked inside one of the city's best-loved bookshops has been winning awards and impressing reviewers since it opened. Its modern approach to traditional Irish cuisine is delightfully fresh, and it's a romantic place to dine with a view of the river. See p 99.

Reading the letters in the Dublin Writers Museum. Fantastic snippets of the lives of Ireland's greatest writers are framed on the wall or encased in glass here. Brendan Behan's assessment of his American fame is priceless. See p 71.

Exploring the General Post Office **2**
 Discovering the illuminated manuscripts
 in the Chester Beatty Library **6**
 Shopping on Cow's Lane **8**
 Spending the day at Glendalough **3**
 Spending the night at the Clarence **9**
 Romantic dinner at the Winding Stair **10**
 Reading the letters in
 the Dublin Writers Museum **1**
 Visiting the dead at St. Michan's Church **12**
 Shopping at Avoca **4**
 Tea at the Queen of Tarts **7**
 Taking a tour of Kilmainham Gaol **11**
 Listening to the gossip at McDaid's **5**



Visiting the dead at St. Michan's Church.

The crypts beneath this 17th-century church have stored bodies for centuries with only limited decomposition because of the cool, dry atmosphere. It's a spooky and oddly beautiful place, said to have inspired Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. See p 54.

Shopping at Avoca. This brightly colored modern shop is stacked to the ceiling with vivid, lightweight wool clothes and blankets loomed and dyed using traditional methods. The kitchenware and other doodads are also cheerful, well-made, and practical. See p 87.

Tea at the Queen of Tarts. This tiny bakery creates delectable sweet treats. On a rainy day, there's no better way to get warm and dry than to duck in here for a cup of tea and a slice of cake. See p 98.

Taking a tour of Kilmainham Gaol. This jail confined Irish rebels alongside ordinary criminals for hundreds of years. Some of the prisoners would later lead the Republic. Tours are moving and fascinating. See p 68.

Listening to the gossip at McDaid's. This was Brendan Behan's favorite pub, and it still attracts a colorful mix of local characters and international scoundrels. It's a great place for a pint and a bit of the gab. See p 62.

Dublin in 1 Day

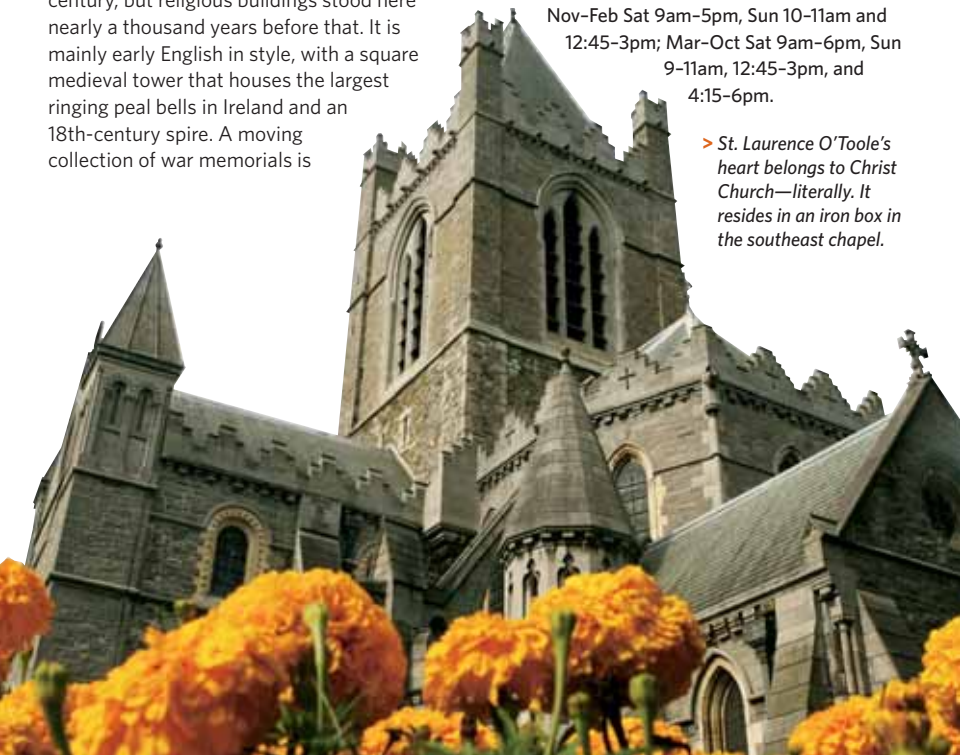
If you have only one day in Dublin, geography is on your side. The vast majority of the capital's best sites are concentrated in the city center, an area of no more than a few square kilometers. If you have a car, leave it behind. Parking is limited, and Dublin's roads are crowded and confusing, with baffling one-way streets and poor signage. Walking is the quickest and most enlightening way to get around; by car you'd miss treasures hidden down lanes and alleyways. That said, if you have limited mobility, the buses and taxis are a reasonably good alternative to cars, though they're slow, confining, and time-consuming compared to walking.

START Bus 49, 49A, 49B, 50, 54A, 56A, 65, 65B, 77 & 77A, to Patrick Street & Upper Kevin Street.

① **★★ St. Patrick's Cathedral.** The largest church in Ireland, and one of the most beloved places of worship in the world, St. Patrick's is one of two Anglican Cathedrals in Dublin. Most of what you can see dates from the 14th century, but religious buildings stood here nearly a thousand years before that. It is mainly early English in style, with a square medieval tower that houses the largest ringing peal bells in Ireland and an 18th-century spire. A moving collection of war memorials is

tucked away at the very back of the cavernous nave, including a very low-key tribute to the Irish dead of World War II. (Ireland was neutral in that war, but around 200,000 men volunteered to fight with the Allies.) ⌚ 30 min. 21-50 Patrick's Close, Patrick St., Dublin 8. ☎ 01/475-4817. www.stpatrickscathedral.ie. Admission €5.50 adults, €4.70 students and seniors. Year-round Mon-Fri 9am-6pm; Nov-Feb Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10-11am and 12:45-3pm; Mar-Oct Sat 9am-6pm, Sun 9-11am, 12:45-3pm, and 4:15-6pm.

> *St. Laurence O'Toole's heart belongs to Christ Church—literally. It resides in an iron box in the southeast chapel.*



- 1 St. Patrick's Cathedral
- 2 Christ Church Cathedral
- 3 Dublin Castle
- 4 Chester Beatty Library
- 5 The Porterhouse
- 6 Ha'Penny Bridge
- 7 General Post Office
- 8 Dublin Writers Museum
- 9 Hugh Lane Gallery





> *In the 1860s, the Guinness family donated a stained-glass window to St. Patrick's with the motto, "I was thirsty and ye gave me drink."*

2 ★ Christ Church Cathedral. This magnificent Anglican Cathedral was designed to be seen from the river, so walk to it from the river side in order to fully appreciate its size. It dates from 1038, when Sitric, Danish king of Dublin, built the first wooden church here. The original foundation was rebuilt in stone by the Norman warrior Strongbow, in 1171. The present impressive structure is mainly 19th century; the best way to get a glimpse of what the original must have been like is to visit the 12th-century crypt, which is unchanged. Look out for a heart-shaped iron box in the southeast chapel, which is believed to contain the heart of St. Laurence O'Toole. ⌚ 30 min. Christ Church Place, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/677-8099. Tickets €6 adults, €4 students and kids 14 & under. June–Aug daily 9am–6pm; Sept–May daily 9:45am–5:30pm.

3 Dublin Castle. Built in the 13th century, this was the center of British rule in Ireland for more than 700 years. You can wander the grounds for free, but they're disappointingly plain; the official tour takes in the much more impressive State Apartments, the early-18th-century

Treasury, and the Gothic chapel building, with its fine plaster decoration and carved-oak gallery. If it's open, check out the Undercroft, an excavated site on the grounds where an early Viking fortress once stood. ⌚ 1 hr.; tours every 20–25 min. Palace St. (off Dame St.), Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-7129. www.dublincastle.ie. Free admission to grounds; tours €4.50 adults, €3.50 when State Apartments not available, €3.25 seniors and students, €2 kids 11 & under. Mon–Fri 10am–4:45pm; Sat–Sun and holidays 2–4:45pm.

4 ★★★ Chester Beatty Library. In the garden of Dublin Castle, this amazing little museum is filled with illuminated manuscripts from around the world—some more than 1,000 years old. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 66, **1**.

5 🍷★★ The Porterhouse. This great microbrewery pub has a laid-back, folksy atmosphere and a fine selection of hearty Irish classics on the lunch menu. 16–18 Parliament St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/679-8847. www.porterhousebrewco.com. \$.



> *The real show at Dublin Castle is inside, where visitors can tour the old State Apartments of the English viceroys.*

6 Ha'penny Bridge. Though it's officially named the Liffey Bridge, this pretty cast-iron arch, built in 1816, is better known by the toll once charged to cross it: half a penny. Its name is pronounced "hay-penny," and the toll was abolished in 1919, when passage was made free. ⌚ 15 min. Connects Wellington Quay and Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin 2.

7 ★ General Post Office. This is a virtual pilgrimage site for anyone with even a passing interest in modern Irish history. O'Connell Street's grand, neoclassical, battle-scarred post office was the scene of fierce fighting during the Easter Rising of 1916 and the civil war of 1922. There are a few exhibits inside—including the original Declaration of Independence, which was read from the front steps—but by touching the bullet holes in the walls out front you can gain a palpable sense of this building's history. ⌚ 15 min. O'Connell St., Dublin 1. ☎ 01/705-8833. Free admission. Mon–Sat 8am–8pm; Sun 10:30am–6:30pm.

8 ★★★ Dublin Writers Museum. Lovers of Irish literature will find it hard to tear themselves away from this wonderful museum filled with the detritus of literary lives. It's in Parnell Square, just up the street from the post office. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 71, 3.

9 ★★ Hugh Lane Gallery. This small art gallery punches above its weight with a strong collection of Impressionist works, including pieces by Edgar Degas and Édouard Manet, sculptures by Auguste Rodin, a marvelous collection of stained glass by Dubliner Harry Clarke, and numerous works by modern Irish artists. One room contains the maddeningly cluttered studio of the Irish painter Francis Bacon, which the gallery purchased from London, moved to Dublin piece by piece, and then reconstructed here behind glass. They moved everything—right down to the dust. ⌚ 1 hr. Parnell Sq. N., Dublin 1. ☎ 01/222-5550. Free admission. Tues–Thurs 10am–6pm; Fri–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

Dublin in 2 Days

With two days in Dublin, you'll be able to see a few more of the capital's top-tier, quintessential sites such as the Four Courts, the National Museum of Ireland, and Trinity College (the most painful omission from the 1-day tour), as well as a smattering of lesser-known extraordinary places, such as St. Michan's Church. After overloading on history, cap off your second day with a shot of 21st-century Dublin nightlife in Temple Bar, the city's coolest enclave.



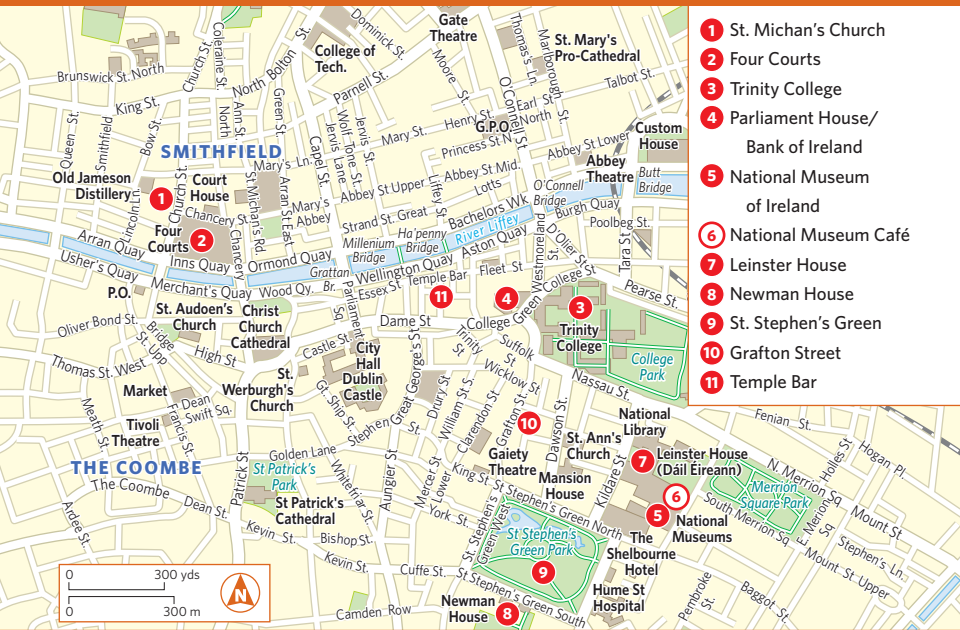
> Window shopping on Grafton Street doesn't end at sundown.

START Bus 134 to Church Street at Mary's Lane & Chancery Street.

1 ★★ St. Michan's Church. Built on the site of an early Danish chapel from 1095, this 17th-century edifice has fine interior woodwork and an organ (dated 1724) on which Handel is said to have played his *Messiah*. A unique yet macabre feature of this church is the underground burial vault. Because of the dry atmosphere, bodies have lain for centuries without showing signs of decomposition. It is said that Bram Stoker's visits to the vaults

as a child inspired him to write *Dracula*. **Note:** The vaults are not wheelchair accessible. ⌚ 30 min. Church St., Dublin 7. ☎ 01/872-4154. Free admission. Guided tour of church and vaults €4 adults, €3.50 seniors and students, €3 kids 11 & under. Nov 1–Mar 16 Mon–Fri 12:30–3:30pm; Mar 17–Oct 31 Mon–Fri 10am–12:45pm and 2–4:30pm. Year-round Sat 10am–12:45pm.

2 Four Courts. Home to the Irish legal courts since 1796, this fine 18th-century building was designed by James Gandon (who also designed the Custom House; p 58), and is distinguished



by its graceful Corinthian columns, massive dome, and exterior statues of Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, and . . . Moses. The building was at the center of the fighting during the civil war of 1922 and was badly damaged in the battle, but it was later artfully restored. You'll be allowed to wander around inside only if court is in session when you visit. ⌚ 30 min. Inns Quay, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/872-5555. Free admission. Mon-Fri 11am-1pm and 2-4pm, but only if court is in session.

3 ★★ Trinity College. Most visitors wouldn't think of coming to Trinity without seeing the Book of Kells, on permanent display here. If you're short on time or money, however, we recommend visiting the illuminated manuscripts at the Chester Beatty Library instead. For us, the chief pleasure of coming to this hallowed institution—founded in 1592 and still the foremost university in Ireland—is wandering its beautiful grounds. With romantic, cobbled squares, landscaped gardens, and a picturesque old quadrangle, it's one of the most romantic spots in Dublin. ⌚ 1 hr. College Green, Dublin 2. ☎ 01/896-1000. Free admission. Book of Kells: €8 adults, €7 seniors and students. Mon-Sat 9:30am-5pm; Sun noon-4:30pm (opens at 9:30am June-Sept).



> The original "four courts" were Chancery, Exchequer, King's Bench, and Common Pleas; though today they are numbered 1 through 4.

4 Parliament House/Bank of Ireland. Now occupied by the Bank of Ireland, this impressive, colonnaded building was constructed in 1729 to house the Irish Parliament. This short-lived institution dissolved itself in 1801, when the British Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, promised to reform the anti-Catholic



➤ *The sale of the former Parliament House in 1803 stipulated the building be altered so it could not be used again for government. It's now a Bank of Ireland.*

laws; King George III disagreed and forced Pitt to resign, and the Irish lost their independent government and got nothing in return. Highlights include the windowless front portico, built to help parliamentarians avoid the distractions from the outside world; and the grand House of Lords chamber with its oak woodwork, 18th-century tapestries, golden mace, and sparkling crystal chandelier. ⌚ 45 min. 2 College Green, Dublin 2. ☎ 01/661-5933, ext. 2265. Free admission. Mon–Wed and Fri 10am–4pm; Thurs 10am–5pm. Guided 45-min. tours of House of Lords chamber Tues 10:30am, 11:30am, and 1:45pm (except holidays).

5 ★★ **National Museum of Ireland.** This flagship museum of Irish history contains a breathtaking selection of prehistoric and early Christian artifacts. Among the highlights are a dazzling collection of ancient Celtic jewelry and some fascinating exhibits from excavations of early Dublin settlements. This is also where you'll see such iconic archaeological finds as the Tara Brooch and the Cross of Cong. ⌚ 1½ hr. Kildare St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-7444. www.museum.ie. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 2–5pm.

6 ☕ ★★ **National Museum Café.** A good place to refuel after a wander among the nation's treasures. Everything is made fresh: soups, salads, quiches, and an abundance of pastries. **National Museum of Ireland**, Kildare St. ☎ 01/677-7444. \$.

7 **Leinster House.** The home of the Dáil (Irish House of Representatives) and Seanad (Irish Senate), this is the modern center of Irish government. Dating from 1745 and originally known as Kildare House, the building is said to have been the model for Irish-born architect James Hoban's design for the White House in Washington, D.C. Tickets are available for guided tours four times a day on weekdays. When the Dáil is in session (Tues–Thurs) you may also be able to watch part of a debate in the public gallery. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, it's sometimes possible to take evening tours as well. For tickets, call the events desk (☎ 01/618-3781; event.desk@oireachtas.ie) or contact your country's embassy in Dublin, and they can arrange a tour on your behalf. ⌚ 45 min. Kildare St. and Merrion Sq., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/618-3000. Free admission. By appointment only, Oct–May Mon–Fri 10am–4:30pm.

8 Newman House. These beautifully restored Georgian townhouses are exceptional examples of Palladian architecture. The Catholic University of Ireland moved here in the mid-19th century. ⌚ 1 hr. 85–86 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. ☎ 01/706-7422. Guided tours €5 adults; €4 seniors, students, and kids 11 & under. June–Aug Tues–Fri noon–5pm; Oct–May by appointment only.

9 St. Stephen's Green. Every time we visit this lovely urban park, we spot some new and imaginative artwork hidden amid its leafy walkways. Among them is a beautiful statue commemorating the Irish rebel Wolfe Tone (beside an affecting monument to the Great Famine), and a garden of scented plants for blind visitors. This is a great place for a summer picnic. If the weather's fine, you can take a buggy ride through the park; rides leave from the Grafton Street side and cost €20 to €50 for one to four passengers. ⌚ 30 min. Dublin 2.

10 ★ Grafton Street. Before you give your feet a well-earned rest, take the time to walk down Dublin's most famous shopping street. It's a

combination of big chains, chichi department stores, and little shops, and as pricey as in any big city—although bargains can be found. It's also a popular site for street performers, so you're almost guaranteed an impromptu show on a sunny day. There's an irresistible photo op to be found at the junction with Sloane Street, in the form of a life-size bronze statue of poor, doomed Molly Malone. Unveiled in 1987, it raised a few eyebrows due to Molly's somewhat revealing décolletage. With typical dryness, locals swiftly nicknamed it “the Tart with the Cart.” ⌚ 20 min. Dublin 2.

11 ★★ Temple Bar. There are really two Temple Bars, depending on when you visit. During the day, Temple Bar is an artsy, cultured district full of trendy shops and modern art galleries, such as the huge **Temple Bar Gallery & Studios** (5–9 Temple Bar; ☎ 01/671-0073). But such refinement gives way to an altogether more raucous atmosphere after dark, when things can get pretty lively. With its myriad selection of pubs, bars, and hip clubs, this is definitely where it's at in Dublin after dark. ⌚ 2 hr. Dublin 2.

> *Fight locals for a picnic spot on St. Stephen's Green, followed with a buggy ride.*



Dublin in 3 Days

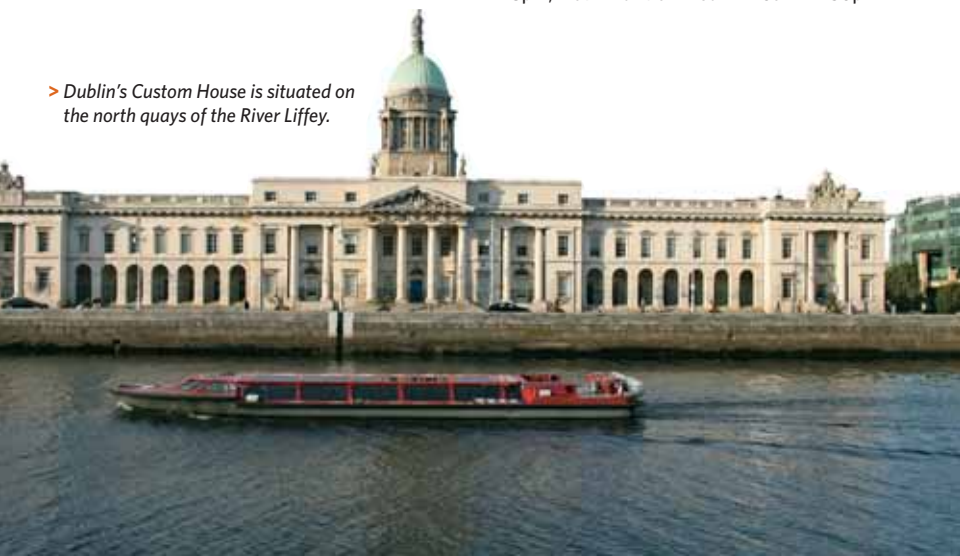
Three days in Dublin will leave you satisfied that you've experienced the city. Of course, you could spend a month here and still find new sites to visit and places to explore, but the equivalent of a long weekend is enough to get a rounded sense of the Irish capital. Start with a trip to the National Gallery of Ireland and a quick pass by Custom House, before heading out to the suburbs for a look around Phoenix Park (bring a picnic if the weather's good) and the Irish President's House—if you can get on a tour.

START Bus 5, 6, 7, 7A, 8, 10, 44, 47, 47B, 48A & 62 to Merrion Square West.

1 ★★ National Gallery of Ireland. Ireland's national art museum includes a collection of European works from the 14th to the 20th century: paintings by Vermeer, Monet, and Picasso, in addition to Irish artists such as Jack B. Yeats, brother of the poet William Butler. The gallery owes its existence, in part, to the largesse of George Bernard Shaw, who bequeathed a third of the royalties from his plays in perpetuity—in honor, so he said, of the education the museum had given him as a boy. 🕒 1½ hr. Merrion Sq. W., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/661-5133. www.nationalgallery.ie. Free admission. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm (Thurs until 8:30pm); Sun noon–5:30pm. Free guided tours (meet in the Shaw Room) Sat 3pm; Sun 2, 3, and 4pm.

2 Custom House. Completed in 1791, this beautifully proportioned Georgian building has a long classical facade of graceful pavilions, arcades, and a central dome topped by a statue of Commerce. The 14 keystones over the doors and windows are known as the Riverine Heads, because they represent the Atlantic Ocean and the 13 principal rivers of Ireland. Although it burned to a shell in 1921, the building has been masterfully restored. The exterior is the main attraction here, and most of the interior is closed to the public; but in case you're keen on learning more, there's a visitor center with exhibitions and an audiovisual presentation telling the story of its reconstruction. 🕒 20 min. Custom House Quay, Dublin 1. ☎ 01/888-2538. Admission to Visitor's Centre €1.50, €4 families. Mid-Mar–Oct Mon–Fri 10am–12:30pm, Sat–Sun 2–5pm; Nov–mid-Mar Wed–Fri 10am–12:30pm.

> *Dublin's Custom House is situated on the north quays of the River Liffey.*





> Perhaps the most famous work in the National Gallery of Ireland is Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*.

3 ★ kids Phoenix Park. The vast green expanses of Phoenix Park are Dublin's playground, and it's easy to see why. This well-designed, user-friendly park is crisscrossed by a network of roads and quiet pedestrian walkways that make its 688 hectares (1,700 acres) easily accessible. It's a restful place to spend an hour

or two, but there's plenty to do here should you feel active. The home of the Irish president (see p 60) is in the park, as is the **Dublin Zoo** (see 5). The visitor center, adjacent to Ashtown Castle, dispenses maps and information. ⌚ 1½ hr. minimum. 3km (1½ miles) west of city center and north of the River Liffey, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/677-



> Polo players take advantage of the green expanses in Dublin's Phoenix Park, Europe's largest enclosed urban park.

0095. www.heritageireland.ie. Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 10am–6pm; Jan–Mar and Nov–Dec daily 10am–5pm; Oct daily 10am–5:30pm.

4 Áras an Uachtaráin (the Irish President's House).

Once the summer retreat of the British viceroy, this 1751 country house has been expanded several times over the years, gradually accumulating splendor. Guided tours start at the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre every Saturday. After an introductory film, a bus brings visitors to and from the main house.

Tours are only on Saturdays, and no more than 525 tickets are given out, on a first-come, first-served basis, so arrive before 1:30pm. ⌚ 1 hr., but allow time to queue. Departs from Phoenix Park Visitor Centre, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/670-9155. www.president.ie. Free admission. Summer Sat 10am–5pm; winter 10:30am–4pm.

5 ★ **Kids Dublin Zoo.** If you've got kids and they're getting bored of all the history, here's the antidote. This modern, humane zoo provides a naturally landscaped habitat for more than 235 species of wild animals and tropical birds. Further amusements for youngsters include a train ride around the zoo and the unfailingly cute Children's Pets Corner. Self-explanatory exhibits include "African Plains," "Fringes of the Arctic," and the "World of Primates." ⌚ 1½ hr. Phoenix Park, Dublin 8. ☎ 800/924-848. www.dublinzoo.ie. Tickets €15 adults, €8.70 special needs adults, €12 seniors, €12.50 students, €5.50 special needs child, €10.50 children 3–16, free for children 2 & under. Mar–Sept daily 9:30am–6pm; Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm; Nov–Dec daily 9:30am–4pm; Jan daily 9:30am–4:30pm; Feb daily 9:30am–5pm. Last admission to African Plains 30 min. before closing.

6 ★★ kids Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum. This moving, even disturbing, prison museum is a key sight for anyone interested in Ireland's struggle for independence from British rule. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 68, **2**.

7 ★ Collins Barracks. This splendidly restored, early-18th-century military building now contains much of the National Museum of Ireland's vast collection of decorative arts. Most notable among the collection is the display of Irish silver and furniture. ⌚ 1½ hr. Benburb St., Dublin 7. ☎ 01/677-7444. Free admission. Tours (hours vary) €2 adults, free for seniors and kids. Tues-Sat 10am-5pm; Sun 2-5pm.

8 Guinness Storehouse. Founded in 1759, the Guinness Brewery produces the distinctive dark stout known the world over. The tour takes in the whole place, starting in a converted 19th-century hops store, which contains the World of Guinness Exhibition, then moves on to the Gilroy Gallery, dedicated to the famous design work of John Gilroy. Last but not least, stop in at the breathtaking Gravity Bar, where you can sample a glass of the famous brew in the glass-enclosed bar 200 feet (61m) above the ground. **Note:** As this book was going to press, there were mutterings that Guinness was to close its famous Dublin brewery—news that has been met with predictable consternation locally. Assurances have been made that this is not the case, but all the same, check before heading out. ⌚ 1 hr. St. James's Gate, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/408-4800. www.guinness-storehouse.com. Tickets €15 adults, €11 seniors and students, €5 children 6-12, €34 families. Daily 9:30am-5pm.

9 🍷 ★★ Leo Burdock. It's worth the half-mile walk (or taxi ride) from the Guinness Storehouse to this nearly 100-year-old takeout shop to sample the legendary fish and chips. 2 Werburgh St., Dublin 8. ☎ 01/454-0306. \$.

10 ★ kids Dublin Ghost Bus. The tour bus-phobic should take heed: This one's actually pretty good. A spooky evening tour in a bus decked out in, um . . . spooky wallpaper, it addresses Dublin's history of felons, fiends, and phantoms. You'll see haunted houses, learn of Dracula's Dublin origins, and even get a



> Celebrating its 250th anniversary, the distinctive dark Guinness stout has become the unofficial drink of Ireland.

crash course in body snatching. It's all ghoulish fun but genuinely scary in places, so it's not recommended for pre-teens. ⌚ 2¼ hr. Departs Dublin Bus, 59 Upper O'Connell St., Dublin 1. ☎ 01/873-4222. www.dublinbus.ie/sightseeing. Mon-Thurs 8pm; Fri 8 and 8:30pm; Sat-Sun 7 and 9:30pm. Tickets €25 adults. Not recommended for kids 13 & under.

Dublin Pub-Crawl

We all know what an Irish pub is *meant* to look like, and they have become a popular export in destinations as far away as Buenos Aires and Cape Town. But there's nothing like the real thing. As you might guess, nowhere in the world do Irish pubs seem so alive, so coursing with history, character, and vitality, than they do in the Irish capital. Dublin has more than 1,000 pubs, and they're more than just places to drink; they are cultural monuments, shrines to the *craic*, the very embodiment of the Irish spirit—so to speak.



➤ *In Ireland, the pub is a way of life, not just a watering hole.*

START Bus 10, 11, 11A/Luas to St. Stephen's Green to Lower Baggot Street at Fitzwilliam Street.

1 ★★★ Doheny and Nesbitt. Long popular with politicians, journalists, and economists, this gorgeous pub makes a great start to any stout-fueled tour of Dublin. Founded in 1850, it's just around the corner from the government buildings. It's said that the seeds of Ireland's current economic success were planted here, where a band of politicians, civil servants, and

economists regularly met and drank in the 1980s. Journalists dubbed them "the Doheny and Nesbitt School of Economics." Quiet, even sedate during the day, this place is particularly busy on hot summer nights, when the crowds spill out happily onto the streets outside.
5 Lower Baggot St. ☎ 01/676-2945.

2 ★★ McDaid's. Just off Grafton Street, McDaid's is one of those rare establishments—able to be all things to all people. Founded in 1779, it has a long literary history. It was the writer



Brendan Behan's favorite pub (and he was a professional drinker), and its fame still brings in crowds of tourists. This doesn't stop the locals from coming, though, and the colorful mix of Irish regulars and wide-eyed visitors makes for a lively evening. When we last visited, a fellow drinker swore to us that the ceilings were so high because they'd stacked bodies there when the building served as the Dublin morgue. We're pretty sure we were being spun a yarn, but in any case McDaid's does get packed to the high rafters with live bodies every night, so it's good to stop by late in the afternoon. 3 Harry St., off Grattan St. ☎ 01/679-4395.

★★ **Grogan's Castle Lounge.** With its old, wood-paneled walls lined with a ragtag collection of art (most of which is for sale), this old pub has changed little in the last 50 years. It is renowned as one of the city's friendlier joints. It's a favorite among writers and journalists, so it's a great place to eavesdrop on political gossip or hear the latest topical jokes. Open a newspaper, sit conspicuously near the bar, order a pint of Guinness, and somebody will surely come to ask your opinion about something. 15 William St. S. ☎ 01/677-9320.

★★★ **The Long Hall.** Mercifully (some might say miraculously) untouched by the renova-



➤ **THIS PAGE** Joycean revelers at Davy Byrnes pub. **OPPOSITE PAGE** You'll hear native Dubliners say they're going "down the pub" or to the "local" for some craic (fun). The Long Hall is pictured here.

tions that have dogged this corner of Dublin for years now, the Long Hall, many locals believe, is the city's most handsome pub. We think it ties with Davy Byrnes (p 71) before both lose to Doheny and Nesbitt in the playoffs, but we will concede that it's close. The rich ceiling of red oak, the titular long bar stretching the whole length of the building, and the marvelous, timeworn chandeliers give it a jewel box quality, but the crowd is anything but precious: The regulars are a mixed group of local professionals and tourists, and the bar staff are friendly. The clock mysteriously promising "Correct Time" can be easily ignored, as many a visitor has come for a quick pint but stayed for hours. 51 S. Great George's St. ☎ 01/475-1590.

5 ★ The Porterhouse. After all that pub-crawling, it's time to put some food in your stomach. The Porterhouse is a microbrewery and specializes in traditional Irish pub food, so this is just the place for a hearty plate of sausages and mash, or a big bowl of Irish stew, and a small half-pint (known just as a "half") of one of their seasonal tasty ales. This big, modern pub has wood floors and lots of tables, so you're likely to get a seat. You can sit and think about where to go next while filling your stomach with some affordable, quality pub food. 16-18 Parliament St. ☎ 01/679-8847. www.porterhousebrewco.com.

6 ★★ O'Neill's. If you've made it this far on your epic pub-crawl, then you deserve to finish your night in O'Neill's. This big, blowsy barn of a pub is a lively place to spend an evening. Outside it's a grand, historic Victorian building; inside it's a big, swinging joint with a lively atmosphere. Bands play most nights, so it's a good place to hear traditional and modern Irish music. It also has a crew of fiercely loyal regulars who will talk your ear off if you let them. It's a great place to sit back and people-watch into the small hours—but it's definitely not a quiet option. 2 Suffolk St. ☎ 01/679-3656. www.oneillsbar.com.

Literary Pub-Crawl

Walking in the footsteps of Joyce, Behan, Beckett, Shaw, Kavanagh, and other Irish literary greats, this guided tour visits Dublin's most famous pubs and explores their deep, literary connections. Actors provide humorous performances and commentary between stops. Throughout the night, you can join in a literary quiz; if you win, you'll get a prize. The tour runs daily from April to November. The festivities kick off at the Duke Pub on Duke Street (off Grafton St.) at 7:30pm, take about 2½ hours, and cost €12 adults, €10 students (no children). See www.dublinpubcrawl.com or call ☎ 01/670-5602 for more information.



Dublin's Best Museums

Our favorite museums in Dublin are the ones that often get overlooked by other guidebooks and brochures, relegated to a passing reference in a write-up of bigger and more famous places, such as the National Museum of Ireland. And yet, small though it is, we've rarely been to a museum that matches the Chester Beatty Library for sheer "wow" factor. The Dublin Writers Museum is a must for all fans of Irish literature, while the National Gallery of Ireland has an intimate appeal, despite the impressiveness of its collection. We could lose ourselves for days in these places. Come to think of it, we frequently do.

START Bus 13, 16, 19 & 123; (DART: Tara Street) to Dublin Castle, off Dame Street.

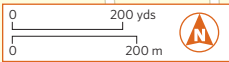
1 ★★★ Chester Beatty Library. This amazing little museum is named after Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, an American-born British mining tycoon and avid collector of ancient art and manuscripts. He bequeathed most of his collection to the Irish nation in 1957—and what a collection it is, with works from around the world dating as far back as 2700 B.C. The array of early illuminated gospels and religious manuscripts is breathtaking, and there are endless surprises

here: from beautiful copies of the Koran from the 8th and 9th centuries to jade books, snuff bottles, and other precious objects from China and the Far East. Best of all: It's free. ☉ 2 hr. Clock Tower Building, Dublin Castle, Dame Street. ☎ 01/407-0750. www.cbl.ie. Free admission. Tues–Fri 10am–5pm (Mon–Fri May–Sept); Sat 11am–5pm; Sun 1–5pm. Free guided tours Wed and Sat 2:30pm.

> A rare calligraphy copy of the Koran at the Chester Beatty Library.



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- 1** Chester Beatty Library
- 2** Kilmainham Gaol
- Historical Museum
- 3** Newman House
- 4** National Museum of Ireland
— Archaeology & History
- 5** National Gallery
of Ireland
- 6** Dublin Writers Museum
- 6** Dublin Writers Museum
- Art Gallery
- Dublin Writers Museum
- Gardens of Remembrance
- Rotunda Hosp.
- Gate Theatre
- James Joyce Centre
- Dept of Education
- Police Station
- St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral
- G.P.O.
- Abbey Theatre
- Custom House
- Butt Bridge
- Talbot Mem. Bridge
- George's Quay
- Poolbeg St.
- Tara Street Station
- Moss St.
- City Arts Centre
- Shaw St.
- Pearse St.
- Nassau St.
- St. Ann's Church
- Mansion House
- Gaiety Theatre
- St. Stephen's Green West
- St. Stephen's Green Park
- Newman House
- Hume St Hospital
- Merion Square Park
- National Library
- National Gallery
- Leinster House (Dáil Éireann)
- National Museums
- The Shelbourne Hotel
- West Merion Sq.
- Merion Square Park
- St. Patrick's Park
- St. Patrick's Cathedral
- St. Werburgh's Church
- Christ Church Cathedral
- Ormond Quay Upper
- Ormond Quay Lower
- Wellington Quay
- Essex St. Upper
- Essex St. Lower
- Exchequer St.
- Drury St.
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> *The Ardagh Chalice at the National Museum of Ireland.*

2 ★★ kids Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum. This is a key sight for anyone interested in Ireland's struggle for independence from British rule. Within these walls, political prisoners were incarcerated, tortured, and killed from 1796 until 1924. The leaders of the 1916 Easter Uprising were executed here, along with many others. Future *Taoiseach* (prime minister) Eamon de Valera was its final prisoner. To walk along these corridors, through the grim exercise yard, or into the walled compound is a moving experience that lingers in your memory. ⌚ 1 hr. Kilmainham. ☎ 01/453-5984. www.heritageireland.ie. Guided tour €5.30 adults, €3.70 seniors, €2.10 kids, €12 families. Apr–Sept daily 9:30am–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm, Sun 10am–6pm.

3 Newman House. Actually two buildings joined together, these fine Georgian town houses are the historic seat of the Catholic University of Ireland. Known for spectacular plasterwork, no. 85 was built in 1740 by Richard Castle, with relief carving by the Lafranchini Brothers, and no. 86 dates to 1765, with Irish rococo plasterwork. They have been magnificently restored to their original splendor, with one exception: When the university took over the buildings in 1865, the fathers must have been put off by the flirty nudes carved into the rococo plasterwork, for they had them painted over. Most have been returned to their natural shape, but a figure of Juno is still hidden by a very conservative tunic. **Note:** Every other Sun-

> *OPPOSITE PAGE The ghosts of political prisoners and Irish rebels haunt the halls of Kilmainham Gaol ("jail," in Irish).*

day, Newman House hosts a major antiques-and-collectibles fair. ⌚ 1 hr. 85–86 St. Stephen's Green. ☎ 01/706-7422. Fax 01/706-7211. Guided tours €5 adults; €4 seniors, students, and kids 11 & under. June–Aug Tues–Fri noon–5pm; Oct–May by appointment only.

4 ★★ National Museum of Ireland—Archaeology & History. Four museums compose the National Museum of Ireland—the **Collins Barracks** (p 61), the **Natural History Museum** (currently closed), the **Country Life Museum** in County Mayo, and our favorite, the **Archaeology & History Museum**. Many of the country's greatest archaeological treasures are here, including a breathtaking array of ancient Irish gold jewelry and artifacts discovered during the excavations of the early Dublin settlements. There are also important Christian relics here, including the Tara Brooch, the Ardagh Chalice, and the Cross of Cong. ⌚ 1½ hr. Kildare St. ☎ 01/677-7444. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 2–5pm.

5 ★ National Gallery of Ireland. Ireland's national art collection, though relatively small, represents every major European school of painting, with works by Caravaggio, Titian, Vermeer, Monet, Goya, and Picasso. The highlight of the Irish collection is the room dedicated to the mesmerizing works of Jack B. Yeats, brother of the poet W. B. Yeats. ⌚ 1 hr. Merrion Sq. W. ☎ 01/661-5133. www.nationalgallery.ie. Free admission. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm (Thurs until 8:30pm); Sun noon–5:30pm. Free guided tours (meet in the Shaw Room) Sat 3pm; Sun 2, 3, and 4pm.

6 ★★★ Dublin Writers Museum. The published works, portraits, and personal effects of Ireland's best writers are enshrined in this excellent museum on Parnell Square. Pithy postcards from Beckett, Lady Gregory's *lorgnette*, and Behan's letters about partying with the Marx Brothers share space with rare first editions, annals of Irish literary history, and one of the nation's finest restaurants, Chapter One, in the basement of this classic 18th-century building. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 71, **3**.



Literary Dublin

What is it about this country that has produced so many great writers? And what is it about Dublin that draws them to move here and use the city for their inspiration to write books about the Irish experience that move us all? Here is your chance to ponder these mysteries as you pound the pavement in the footsteps of James Joyce, George Bernard Shaw, Jonathan Swift, and Brendan Behan, among others. This walk takes you to some of their homes, their favorite pubs, their churches, and their libraries. See if it inspires you.

START Eccles Street at Nelson Street.

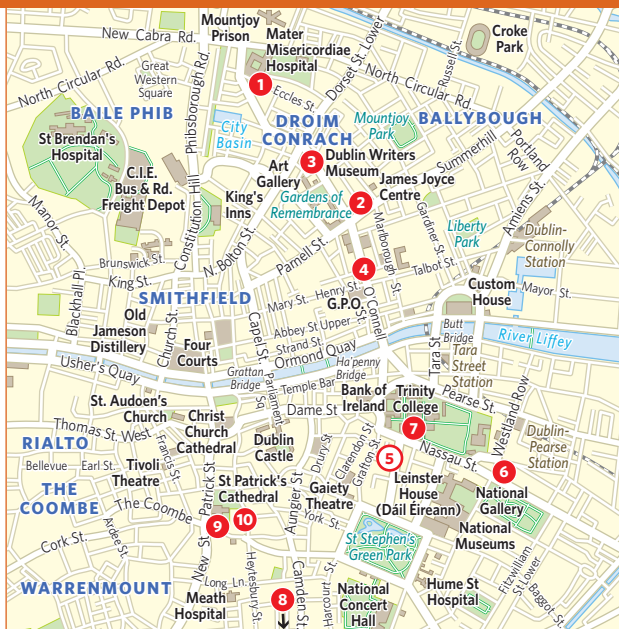
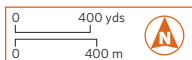
1 ★ No. 7 Eccles Street. In a city famous for literature, our first stop is, appropriately, the home of a fictional character: Leopold Bloom, hero of James Joyce's epic *Ulysses*, a tale of "an ordinary day" in his life on June 16, a date now celebrated by aficionados as Bloomsday. Don't get too excited, however—the house itself was knocked down to build an extension to the Mater Hospital. A commemorative blue plaque with Joyce's portrait indicates the site of Bloom's home, with an excerpt from the book. The original door from No. 7 is at the James Joyce Centre (see below). ⌚ 1 hr.

2 James Joyce Centre. There are pros and cons to this small, idiosyncratic gallery just around the corner from the Dublin Writers Museum. The few early copies of Joyce's work on display are worth a look (including a first edition of *Ulysses* inscribed by a mischievous Brendan Behan: "I wish that I had written it"), but otherwise there's very little in the way of actual memorabilia. For most travelers, it's best to come here if an interesting speaker is scheduled. Die-hard fans, however, will be in heaven. Call about the James Joyce walking tours. ⌚ 45 min. 35 N. Great George's St., Dublin 1. ☎ 01/878-8547. www.jamesjoyce.ie. Admission €5 adults; €4 seniors, students, and kids 9 & under. Separate fees for walking tours and events. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm.



> Die-hard fans can take in the writing table Joyce used while penning *Finnegan's Wake* and a diagram of the infuriatingly complex *Ulysses* at the James Joyce Centre.

- 1 No. 7 Eccles Street
- 2 James Joyce Centre
- 3 Dublin Writers Museum
- 4 James Joyce Statue
- 5 Davy Byrnes
- 6 Oscar Wilde House Museum
- 7 Trinity College
- 8 Shaw Birthplace
- 9 Marsh's Library
- 10 St. Patrick's Cathedral



3 ★★ Dublin Writers Museum. The lives and personalities of Ireland's most influential authors spring to life through the off-camera writings and artifacts assembled here. ⌚ 1 hr. 18 Parnell Sq. ☎ 01/782-2077. www.writersmuseum.com. Adults €7.50, kids €4.70, family €20. Sept–May Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; July–Aug Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 10am–5pm; year-round Sun & holidays 11am–5pm.

4 James Joyce Statue. This life-size sculpture stands at a busy pedestrian-only street, depicting Joyce leaning on his walking stick in a characteristically nonchalant stance. If you're around the statue on Bloomsday, June 16, you'll see Edwardian-dressed actors reading excerpts from the book. ⌚ 10 min. Corner O'Connell St. & N. Earl St. See p 73, Monumental Wit.

5 🍷 Davy Byrnes. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom describes this place as a "moral pub," and stops in for a Gorgonzola sandwich and a glass of burgundy. It has drawn poets, writers, and readers ever since. It dates from 1873, when Davy Byrnes first opened the doors—he presided over it for more than 50 years, and visitors can still see his likeness on one of the murals above the bar. 21 Duke St. (off Grafton St.), Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-5217. www.davybyrnes.com. \$.

When I die Dublin will be written in my heart.
JAMES JOYCE

If you're a writer in Dublin and you write a snatch of dialogue, everyone thinks you lifted it from Joyce... It's as if you're encroaching on his area or ... he's on your shoulder. It gets on my nerves.
RODDY DOYLE

> This statue of James Joyce on O'Connell and North Earl streets is known by locals as "the prick with the stick."



6 Oscar Wilde House Museum. Though he died in Paris and was laid to rest in suitably *soignée* Père Lachaise Cemetery, Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born to be wild here, on October 16, 1854. Keen wit and author of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde graduated from nearby Trinity College before continuing his studies at Oxford in England, where he was infamously imprisoned twice for homosexual activity. After his release, he spent his last few years in Paris, living without inhibition under an assumed name, Sebastian Melmoth. American College restored the house, open to visitors in the summer. ⌚ 45 min. Number One Merrion Sq. ☎ 01/662-0281. www.amcd.ie/oscar_wild_house.jsp.

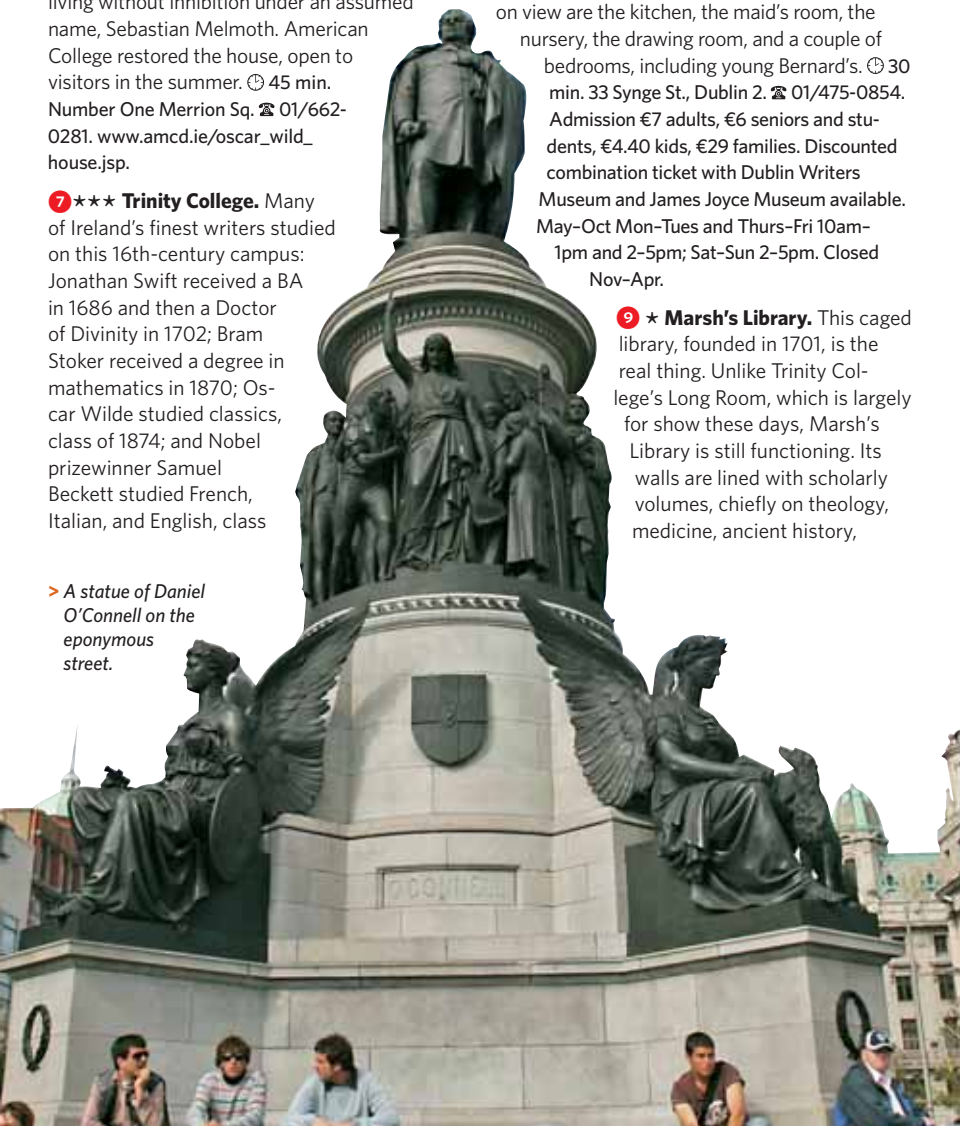
7 ★★★ Trinity College. Many of Ireland's finest writers studied on this 16th-century campus: Jonathan Swift received a BA in 1686 and then a Doctor of Divinity in 1702; Bram Stoker received a degree in mathematics in 1870; Oscar Wilde studied classics, class of 1874; and Nobel prizewinner Samuel Beckett studied French, Italian, and English, class

of 1927. Trinity's Old Library also preserves and displays the **Book of Kells**—an illustrated transcription of the four gospels copied by Irish monks on vellum in Latin around 800 A.D. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 76.

8 ★ Shaw Birthplace. One of Dublin's three (Ireland's four) winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature, George Bernard Shaw lived here until he moved to London in 1876. Recently restored, it has been furnished in Victorian style to re-create the atmosphere of Shaw's early days. Rooms on view are the kitchen, the maid's room, the nursery, the drawing room, and a couple of bedrooms, including young Bernard's. ⌚ 30 min. 33 Synge St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/475-0854. Admission €7 adults, €6 seniors and students, €4.40 kids, €29 families. Discounted combination ticket with Dublin Writers Museum and James Joyce Museum available. May-Oct Mon-Tues and Thurs-Fri 10am-1pm and 2-5pm; Sat-Sun 2-5pm. Closed Nov-Apr.

9 ★ Marsh's Library. This caged library, founded in 1701, is the real thing. Unlike Trinity College's Long Room, which is largely for show these days, Marsh's Library is still functioning. Its walls are lined with scholarly volumes, chiefly on theology, medicine, ancient history,

> A statue of Daniel O'Connell on the eponymous street.





Monumental Wit

Few cities have such a love-hate relationship with their statues as Dublin. Locals have an acerbic nickname for each one, many of them unprintable. The **Joyce** statue on O'Connell Street is "the Prick with a Stick" (see p 71); the statue of **Molly Malone** on Grafton Street is

"the Tart with the Cart" or "the Trollope with the Scallop"; and, depending on whom you talk to, the **Spire of Dublin** on O'Connell Street is either "the Stiletto in the Ghetto," "the Skewer in the Sewer," "the Stiffy by the Liffey," or "the Nail in the Pale."

maps, and Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and French literature. Wire cages, in which readers would be locked in with the more valuable tomes, still stand anachronistically. The interior—a magnificent example of a 17th-century scholar's library—has remained much the same for 3 centuries. The excellent collection of books by and about Jonathan Swift includes books with his editing comments in the borders. ⌚ 30 min. St. Patrick's Close, Upper Kevin St. ☎ 01/454-3511. www.marshlibrary.ie. Donation of €2.50 adults, €1.25 seniors and students requested. Mon and Wed–Fri 10am–1pm and 2–5pm; Sat 10:30am–1pm.

10 ★★ St. Patrick's Cathedral. St. Patrick's is closely associated with the writer Jonathan Swift, who was dean here from 1713 to 1745 and is buried in the nave, alongside his long-time partner, Stella. He wrote many of his most controversial works while working here, and he knew that he owed the church and the city a great deal for supporting him, given that they

were often the targets of his barbed wit. But they kept him on, even after he published his infamous essay "A Modest Proposal," in which he advocated (satirically) that the English should eat Irish babies in order to solve Ireland's food shortages. ⌚ 30 min. 21–50 Patrick's Close, Patrick St., Dublin 8. ☎ 01/475-4817. www.stpatrickscathedral.ie. Admission €5.50 adults, €4.70 students and seniors. Year-round Mon–Fri 9am–6pm; Nov–Feb Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 10–11am and 12:45–3pm; Mar–Oct Sat 9am–6pm, Sun 9–11am, 12:45–3pm and 4:15–6pm.

Bulk Discounts

Combined tickets for the Dublin Writers Museum with the James Joyce Museum or the Shaw Birthplace, plus Malahide Castle are €11.50 adults, €9.50 seniors and students, €7.50 children, €31 families.

MEN OF LETTERS

3 Centuries of Irish Literary Giants

BY LINDA BARTH



Jonathan Swift

1667–1745

CLAIM TO FAME

Essayist, satirist, and novelist.

STOMPING GROUNDS

Born in Dublin, raised in England, educated at Trinity College, served as the dean at St. Patrick's in Dublin until his death.

QUINTESSENTIAL QUOTE

"Every dog must have his day."

HOME, SWEET HOME

Mom was a Brit, but Swift was loyal to Ireland. In his viciously funny essay *A Modest Proposal*, written at a time when unfair British trade policies had left Ireland destitute, he suggested that poor Irish children be "eaten as food," as this would make them "beneficial to the community."

MUST-READ WORK

Gulliver's Travels



Bram Stoker

1847–1912

Novelist, short story writer, journalist, and theater manager.

Born and raised in Dublin, educated at Trinity College, moved to London, where he died.

"How blessed are some people, to whom sleep is a blessing that comes nightly, and brings nothing but sweet dreams."
(from *Dracula*)

Some modern academics argue *Dracula* was written as a metaphor for Ireland's victimization by the British. Though Stoker, a Protestant, believed in Home Rule, he was also a monarchist who felt Ireland should remain part of the British Empire.

Dracula



Oscar Wilde

1854–1900

Playwright, poet, and gay icon.

Born and raised in Dublin, graduated from Trinity College, moved to London, fled to Paris, where he died and is buried.

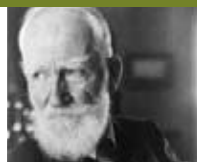
"The best way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it."

FROM THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

Mom was a nationalist and Dad was a prominent doctor, but Wilde left permanently at 24.



The Importance of Being Earnest



George Bernard Shaw

1856–1950

Playwright, novelist, and essayist. Won 1925 Nobel and 1938 Oscar.

Born and raised in Dublin, moved to London in 1876. After marrying, he split time between Hertfordshire and London until his death.

"A lifetime of happiness! No man alive could bear it; it would be hell on earth." (from *Man and Superman*)



Ireland wasn't one of Shaw's hot topics—he was more concerned with poverty, gender equality, and animal cruelty.

Pygmalion

It's unsurprising that 400,000 tourists a year hang upside down to kiss the Blarney Stone in the hope of acquiring the Irish gift of the gab. With one of the oldest literary traditions in Europe, the Irish have always sustained, protected, and advanced themselves with the power of words: It's a virtual canon we present here; for a more diverse range of authors, historic and contemporary, see p 464.



**William
Butler Yeats**
1865–1939

Poet, Irish nationalist, and senator. Won 1923 Nobel.

Born in Dublin, raised in County Sligo, educated at what is now Dublin's National College of Design, lived in Dublin and at his summer home in County Galway.

"What rough beast, its hour come round at last, / Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?" (from "The Second Coming")

Yeats was a staunch patriot and supporter of Home Rule, even serving two terms in the Irish Senate. He wrote, "Being Irish, he had an abiding sense of tragedy, which sustained him through temporary periods of joy."

The Winding Stairs



James Joyce
1882–1941

Novelist.

Born and raised in Dublin, educated at University College, went into self-imposed exile in Zurich, Rome, Paris, and Trieste, where he at times taught English at the Berlitz School.

"Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age." (from *Dubliners*)

Young Joyce was a staunch defender of Home Rule, but he grew disillusioned with the influence of the Catholic Church on Irish politics and what he viewed as the stagnation of Irish culture. The Irish government refused to allow his wife to repatriate his remains, so Joyce is buried in Zurich.

Ulysses or, for the time-pressed, *Dubliners*.



Samuel Beckett
1906–1989

Playwright, novelist, and poet. Won 1969 Nobel.

Born and raised in the Dublin suburbs, educated at Trinity University, moved to Paris, where he joined the Resistance, hung with Joyce and Duchamp, and eventually died.

"Birth was the death of him."

FROM *BREATH*

Let's put it this way: He settled permanently in France in 1939 and wrote all his major works in French.

Waiting for Godot



Seamus Heaney
1939–

Poet and playwright. Won 1995 Nobel.

Born and raised in and around Bellaghy, in County Derry, Northern Ireland; studied at Queens College in Belfast; moved to Dublin in the 1970s and lives there still.

"Running water never disappointed. / Crossing water always furthered something. / Stepping stones were stations of the soul." (from "Squarings")

Being from Northern Ireland, he grew up a British citizen—but he wasn't happy about it. When he was included in a collection of British poetry in the 1980s, he wrote, "Be advised, my passport's green / No glass of ours was ever raised / to toast the Queen." Enough said.

Selected Poems, 1966–1987

Trinity College

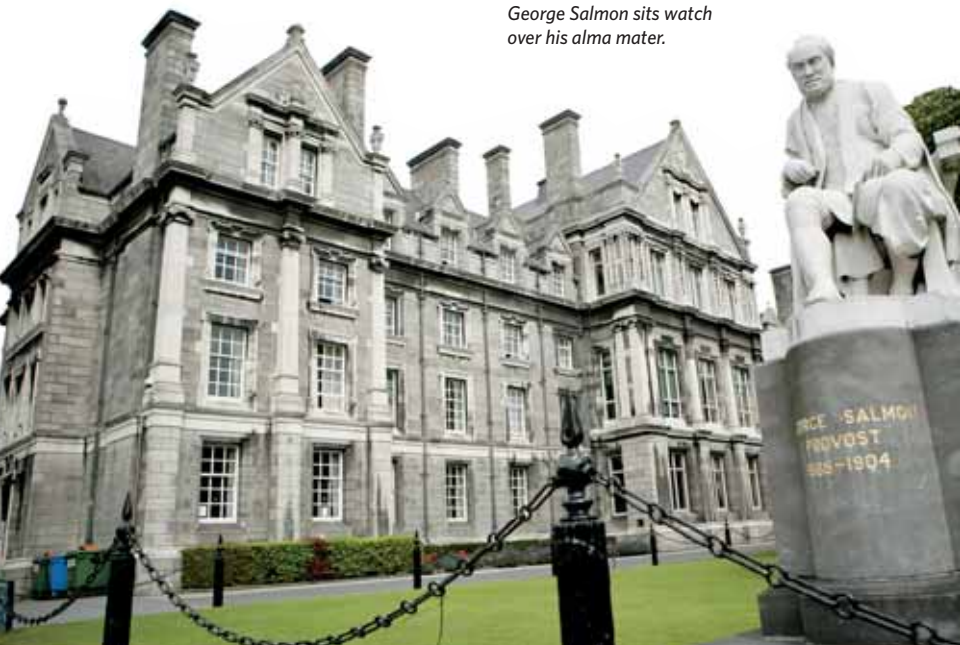
Founded in 1592, Trinity College (aka Dublin University) is Ireland's Harvard or Oxford—the oldest and most prestigious university in the country with the most impressive list of alumni. Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, Edmund Burke, Mary Robinson (and, um, Courtney Love) have all walked these hallowed halls as students. The campus is open to the public year-round, although there might be some access restrictions during the exam periods. It's a beautiful, grand, romantic place to wander around—which, for us, is even more of an attraction than paying to see the **Book of Kells**, which is on permanent display here, although the **Old Library** is worth the price of admission alone. Otherwise, visiting Trinity is completely free.

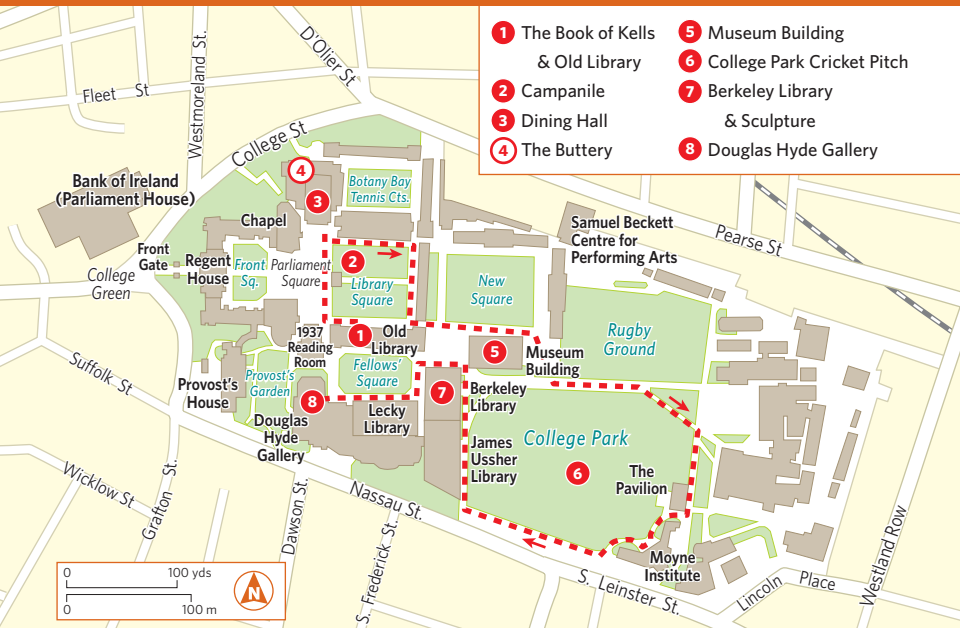
START Bus 7, 7A, 41A, 41B, 41C, 46A, 67, 67A, 67X, 90, 92 & 128 to Trinity College on College Green, between Dame Street and Grafton Street.

1 ★ The Book of Kells & Old Library. This hand-drawn manuscript of the four gospels, dating from the year 800, is one of Ireland's national treasures. The elaborate scripting and colorful illumination, drawn by Irish monks, is undeniably magnificent. Unfortunately, you'll find it hard to see past the hordes of onlookers into the dim glass box in which it is kept, and

it's a bit pricey. However, the Library's Long Room goes some way toward making up for that. The grand, chained library holds many rare works on Irish history and presents frequently changing displays of rare works. ⌚1 hr. Admission to Book of Kells €9 adults, €8 seniors and students, free for kids 11 & under. Combination tickets for the Library and Dublin Experience also available. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5pm; Sun noon–4:30pm (opens at 9:30am June–Sept).

➤ *A statue of former provost George Salmon sits watch over his alma mater.*





- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 The Book of Kells & Old Library | 5 Museum Building |
| 2 Campanile | 6 College Park Cricket Pitch |
| 3 Dining Hall | 7 Berkeley Library & Sculpture |
| 4 The Buttery | 8 Douglas Hyde Gallery |

Dublin University contains the cream of Ireland: rich and thick.

SAMUEL BECKETT

2 Campanile. The most striking and famous monument inside the Trinity grounds, the white Campanile, or bell tower, grabs your attention as soon as you enter through the main archway. Dating from the mid-19th century, it stands on the site of the college's original foundations, from 300 years earlier. Walk all the way around and gaze up at its peak—it looks even better in the sunshine. ⌚ 10 min.

3 Dining Hall. As this book was going to press, it was unclear whether Trinity's dining hall would stay open to visitors once renovation work was completed on The Buttery (see p 79). However, we hear there's talk of keeping it open during the summer. If so, you're in for a real treat. The incredibly high-ceilinged interior and the wooden paneling make even a humble cup of tea seem like a big event. The building was originally designed by Richard Castle in the 1740s, but after collapsing twice, it was rebuilt by Hugh Darley around 1760. It was badly damaged by fire in 1984; the subsequent restoration was showered in well-deserved accolades. ⌚ 30 min.



> Approximately 85% of Trinity's more than 15,700 students are Irish.





➤ *OPPOSITE PAGE* The Book of Kells is shielded behind bulletproof glass in the Old Library's Long Room.
THIS PAGE Trinity College.

④ 🍷 **The Buttery.** Recently reopened after major restoration, the Buttery has long been a popular eating spot for visitors to Trinity and students in holiday time. Food is cheap, hearty, and popular with locals. Trinity College. ☎ 01/896-1000. \$.

⑤ ★ **Museum Building.** Home to the geography and geology departments, this is one of Trinity's hidden gems. It was built in the mid-19th century with a combination of Byzantine and Moorish influences. As you enter the main door, two huge skeletons of giant Irish deer peer down. Walk through and look up to the domed ceiling and the green marbled banisters. The third floor's tiny Geological Museum is a must for fans of fossils. Patrick, the friendly curator, is happy to allow visitors to look around. ⌚ 30 min. ☎ 01/896-1477. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm. Free admission.

⑥ **College Park Cricket Pitch.** To some, cricket is the most civilized sport on the planet; to others it's just baseball on Valium. But even the cynics must concede that a match in play is a uniquely handsome sight to behold—with the players' lily-white uniforms and the sporadic crack of leather on willow. Most matches take place on weekends between May and early September, and when the weather is fine students sprawl on the grass to watch. ⌚ 10 min.

⑦ ★ **Berkeley Library & Sculpture.** Some love Paul Koralek's austere Modernist library, but most hate it. The library's position between two architectural masterpieces—the Museum Building and Thomas Burgh's Library—caused controversy from the start. Koralek's library honors Bishop George Berkeley, famed for his philosophical theory of "immaterialism" (things that can't be proved cannot exist), which went against the theories of Isaac Newton and the Catholic Church. The gleaming sculpture outside the library is **Sphere with Sphere** by Arnaldo Pomodoro (1983). Others in the same series can be found at the Vatican and the United Nations building in New York. ⌚ 30 min.

⑧ ★ **Douglas Hyde Gallery.** Housed in the 1970s-designed **Arts Building**, this gallery accommodates an eclectic collection. With endearing earnestness, its directors claim that it has three gallery spaces, though only two exist in the physical realm—the third consists of talks, printed material, or anything else that contextualizes the other two spaces. Exhibitions, which change every month or so, feature top contemporary artists from Ireland and overseas. Few people seem to wander through, but it's worth a look. ⌚ 20 min. ☎ 01/896-1116. www.douglashydegallery.com. Free admission. Mon–Fri 11am–6pm; Sat 11am–4:45pm.

Temple Bar

Explore this warren of narrow cobblestone streets along the Liffey by day when it's peaceful and clear of nocturnal bar hoppers who are still at home, nursing hangovers from the night before. Saturdays are best of all, when several colorful markets draw treasure seekers and bargain hunters in droves: the book market on Temple Bar Square, the food market on Meeting House Square, and the Designer Mart on Cow's Lane.



> Dubbed Dublin's "Left Bank," the Temple Bar is home to a number of art galleries, including Temple Bar Gallery & Studios.

START **Ha'penny Bridge, Wellington and Lower Ormond quays.**

1 Ha'penny Bridge. Built in 1816, this graceful cast-iron crossing is the prettiest of the Liffey's many bridges. Though officially named the Liffey Bridge, it's far better known by the toll once charged to cross it: half a penny. Now it's free. ⌚ 15 min. Connects Wellington Quay and Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin 2.

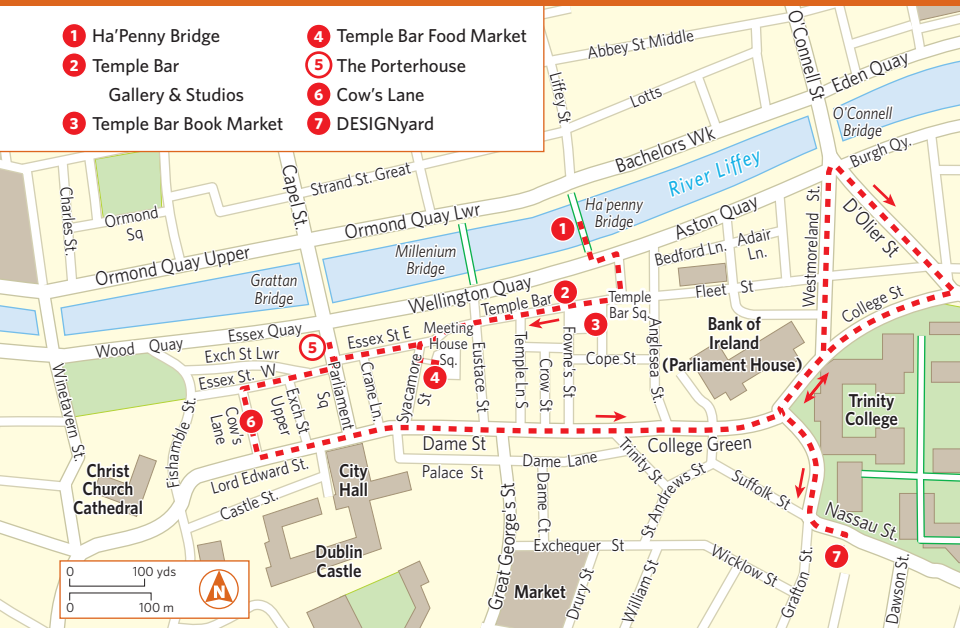
2 ★ Temple Bar Gallery & Studios. This big, rambling art gallery is indicative of all that is good about Temple Bar. It's filled with innovative work by contemporary Irish artists, its colors and creativity are dazzling, and it's run by helpful, friendly people. ⌚ 30 min. 5–9 Temple Bar, Dublin 2. ☎ 01/671-0073. www.templebargallery.com.

templebargallery.com. Tues–Wed and Fri–Sat 11am–6pm; Thurs 11am–7pm.

3 Temple Bar Book Market. This little market sells a small but varied selection of secondhand books—most by Irish writers—in the middle of busy Temple Bar every Saturday. It's perfect for the moment when you get bored with the book you brought from home. ⌚ 30 min. Temple Bar Sq. Sat (subject to weather) 11am–6pm.

4 Temple Bar Food Market. Every Saturday, Meeting House Square fills with stalls selling organic fruit and vegetables, artisan cheeses, home-baked breads, and traditional Irish cakes. It's a colorful, pleasant place to pick up the makings of a picnic lunch. ⌚ 30 min. Meeting House Sq., Temple Bar. Sat (subject to weather) 10am–4:30pm.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Ha'Penny Bridge | 4 Temple Bar Food Market |
| 2 Temple Bar Gallery & Studios | 5 The Porterhouse |
| 3 Temple Bar Book Market | 6 Cow's Lane |
| | 7 DESIGNyard |



> A street musician strums for tourists strolling Temple Bar's lively cobblestone streets.

5 **The Porterhouse.** This handsome pub restaurant is a microbrewery and serves traditional Irish pub food. Load up on sausages and mashed potatoes or a big bowl of Irish stew with a small glass of stout. ⌚ 1 hr. 16–18 Parliament St. ☎ 01/679-8847. www.porterhousebrewco.com.

6 ★ **Cow's Lane.** This little street at the edge of Temple Bar is filled with bijou boutiques carrying the latest Irish fashion designs, beautiful fabrics,

and adorable handbags. There's even an open-air market on Saturdays with cut-price options. ⌚ 1 hr. Cow's Lane, Temple Bar.

7 ★ **DESIGNyard.** This beautiful emporium showcases exquisite, often affordable, work from the best contemporary Irish jewelry designers. All exhibited pieces are for sale. ⌚ 30 min. 48–49 Nassau St. ☎ 01/474-1011. www.designyard.ie. Mon–Wed 10am–6:30pm, Thurs 10am–8pm, Fri–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm.



Dublin Shopping Best Bets

Best for Foodies

Fallon & Byrne, 11-17 Exchequer St. (p 87)

Best Funky Affordable Art

Bad Art Gallery, 79 Francis St. (p 83)

Best Place to Find an Antique Rocking Horse

Pinocchio's, 2 St. Paul's St. (p 88)

Best Place to Browse Dusty Old Volumes

Cathach Books, 10 Duke St. (p 83)

Best for Young Fashionistas

BT2, 28-29 Grafton St. (p 87)

Best Souvenir Sports Shirts

Arnotts, 12 Henry St. (p 86)

Best Head-Turning Headgear

Mad Hatter, 20 Lower Stephen St. (p 89)

Best Gents' Handmade Suits

Louis Copeland, 39-41 Capel St. (p 87)

Best Posh Frocks

Jenny Vander, 20 Market Arcade (p 87)

Best Place to Suit Up for Winter

Dublin Woollen Mills 41-42 Lower Ormond Quay (p 87)

Best Cute Doodads You Don't Really Need

Avoca, 11-13 Suffolk St. (p 87)

Best Place to Defy the Digital Age

The Pen Corner, 12 College Green (p 86)

Best Traditional Music

Claddagh Records, Dame St. (p 89)

Best Eclectic Market Browsing

George's St. Arcade, S. Great George's St. (p 89)

Best Cheats' Antiques

The Drawing Room, 29 Westbury Mall (p 88)

Best Classy Old Department Store

Brown Thomas, 88-95 Grafton St. (p 86)

Best Place to Find That Handbag

Costelloe & Costelloe, 14A Chatham St. (p 88)

> Designer deals abound on Cow's Lane in Temple Bar.



Dublin Shopping A to Z

Antiques & Art

★★ **Bad Art Gallery**

With vibrant art at affordable prices, this bright, spacious gallery is ideal for browsing huge-scale artwork. Many of the best contemporary Irish artists sell works here, amid more than 200 pieces on display. 79 Francis St. ☎ 01/453-7588. www.thebadartgallerydublin.com. MC, V.

★ **Caxton**

An eye-popping number of antique prints are packed into this tiny space—etchings, prints, engravings, and miniature landscapes from all over the world, dating as far back as the 1500s. Serious collectors will be in heaven; the rest of us can just enjoy browsing. 63 Patrick St. ☎ 01/453-0060. No credit cards.

★ **Christy Bird**

Antique furniture has been sold at this family-owned store since 1945. Amid all the quirky collectibles, you might unearth a Tiffany lamp, an old brass phone, or a stained-glass fire

screen. 32 S. Richmond St. ☎ 01/475-4049. www.christybird.com. MC, V.

★★ **Green on Red**

This gallery represents top local and international contemporary artists. It's a little off the tourist track, but well worth the effort—some say it's the finest gallery of its kind in Dublin. 26-28 Lombard St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/671-3414. www.greenonredgallery.com. MC, V.

★★ **Louis Mulcahy**

The ceramic creations of Louis Mulcahy are internationally renowned. Formerly located deep in the Dingle Peninsula, this modest shop gives Mulcahy a base in Dublin. In addition to pottery, he designs furniture, lighting, and hand-painted silk and cotton lampshades. 46 Dawson St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/670-9311. www.louismulcahy.com. MC, V.

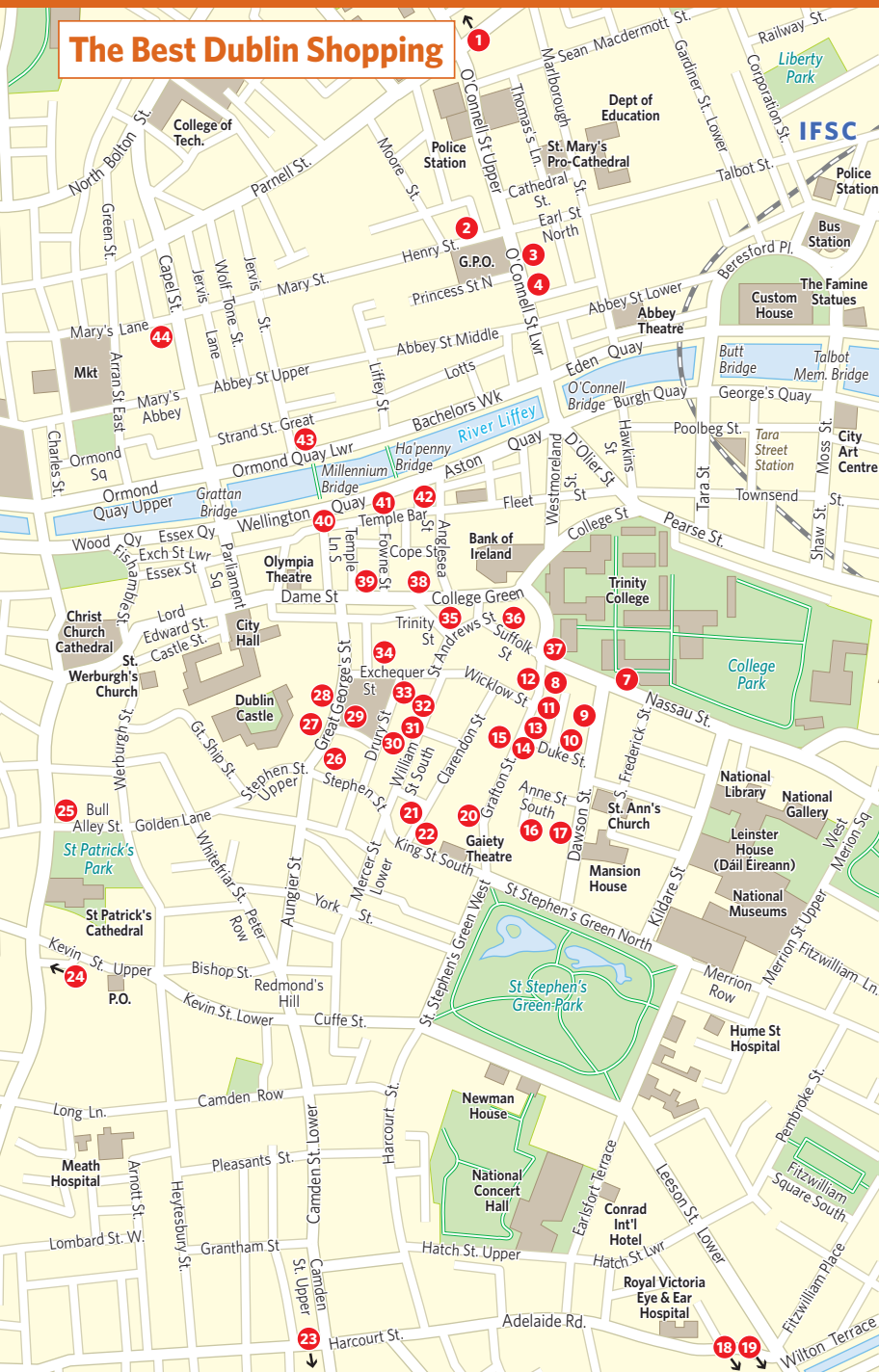
Books & Stationery

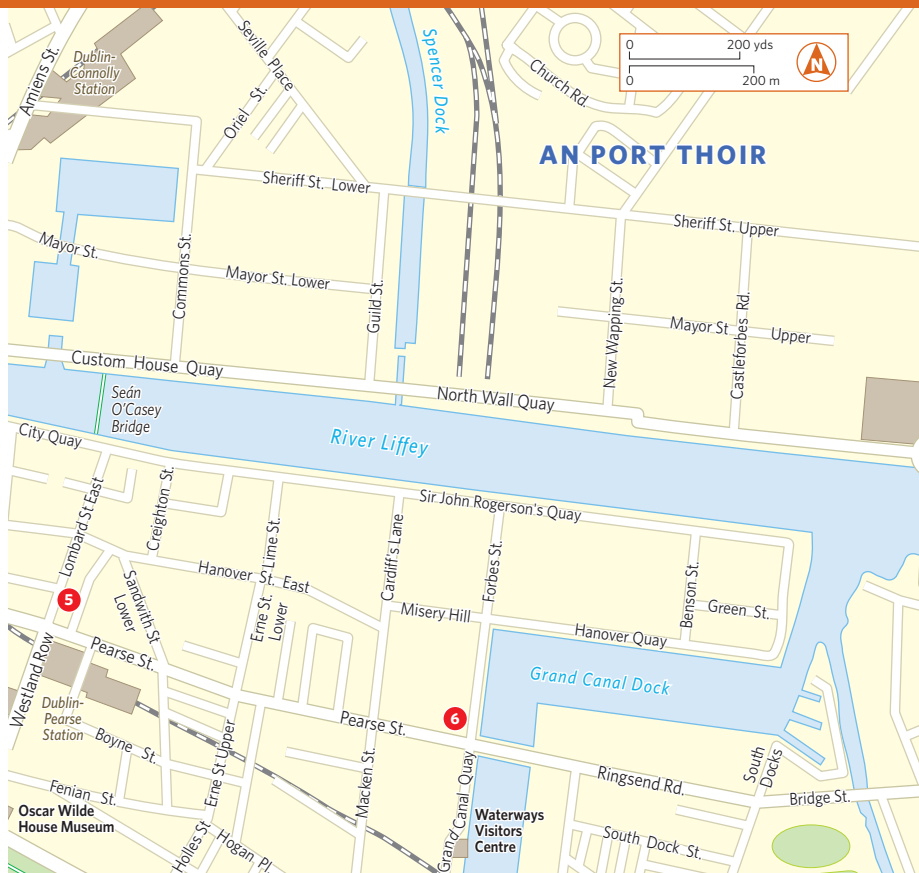
★ **Cathach Books**

Member of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association, this store is not the place to pick up a

> *The Hermès showroom at Brown Thomas.*

The Best Dublin Shopping





Arnotts **2**
 Avoca Handweavers **36**
 Bad Art Gallery **24**
 Blackrock Market **18**
 Brown Thomas **12**
 BT2 **15**
 Butlers Chocolate Café **13**
 Cathach Books **10**
 Caxton **25**
 The Celtic Note **7**
 China Blue **42**
 Christy Bird **23**
 Claddagh Records **39**
 Clearys **3**
 Costelloe & Costelloe **22**
 Design Centre **31**
 DESIGNyard **37**

The Doll Store **27**
 The Drawing Room **8**
 Dublin Woollen Mills **43**
 Dundrum Town Centre **19**
 Eason **4**
 Emma **21**
 Fallon & Byrne **34**
 George's St. Arcade **28**
 Gollum's Precious **33**
 Green on Red **5**
 Harvey Nichols **19**
 Hodges Figgis **9**
 Jenny Vander **30**
 Louis Copeland **44**
 Louis Mulcahy **17**
 Mad Hatter **26**
 Memorabilia **29**

Milk & Cookies **20**
 Monaghan's **14**
 Noble & Beggarman **1**
 The Pen Corner **38**
 Powerscourt
 Townhouse Centre **32**
 Rhinestones **35**
 Sheridan's
 Cheesemongers **16**
 Temple Bar
 Book Market **41**
 Temple Bar
 Food Market **40**
 Tower Craft
 Design Centre **6**
 Weir and Sons **11**



> A weaver works the loom at Avoca.

bestselling thriller. With secondhand rare books and first editions, and the hushed tone of a library, it's for serious bibliophiles. 10 Duke St. ☎ 01/671-8676. www.rarebooks.ie. AE, MC, V.

★ Eason

Going strong since 1819, Eason's flagship store has a staggering selection throughout its four floors. Browse fiction, history, photography, and biographies from Ireland and around the world, and then sink into the onsite cafe to recover. 40 Lower O'Connell St. ☎ 01/858-3800. www.eason.ie. AE, MC, V.

★★ Hodges Figgis

This enormous bookstore has books on virtually every topic. It's so big you can practically get lost in it. It's well worth a leisurely afternoon's wander. 56-58 Dawson St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-4754. AE, MC, V.

★★ Noble & Beggarman

This small but thoughtfully stocked store is packed full of books on Irish art, photography, architecture, design, and art theory; it's perfect after a visit to the museum. Hugh Lane Gallery, Parnell Sq. N. ☎ 01/874-9294. www.nobleandbeggarmanbooks.com. MC, V.

The Pen Corner

For lovers of fountain pens, this stationery store has been selling stylish writing gear since 1927. It also has a lovely collection of unusual and arty cards and notepaper. 12 College Green. ☎ 01/679-3641. AE, MC, V.

Department Stores

Arnotts

Ireland's oldest department store is now also the largest after a recent expansion. The Dublin section on the first floor has all the local Gaelic athletic teamwear. There are decent sections for men's formalwear, household, beauty, and fashion, and the La Brea Bakery for those in need of a snack. 12 Henry St. ☎ 01/805-0400. www.arnotts.ie. AE, MC, V.

★★★ Brown Thomas

The top-hatted doorman out front sets a deceptively formal tone for this great old Dublin institution; we've always found it a relaxed and friendly place, even if the credit card seems to take a beating here. Stop by for most of the major fashion labels before getting your nails done, hands massaged at Jo Malone, and belly filled in the elegant Kitchen Café. 88-95 Grafton St. ☎ 01/605-6666. AE, MC, V.

Clearys

Located in a listed building on busy O'Connell Street, Clearys enjoyed a huge revamp in 2004 but retains some original architectural touches. Karen Millen, Mexx, Topshop, East, Principles, Ben Sherman, Levi, and Van Heusen cater to men and women of all ages. There's also a wonderful houseware department. 18-27 Lower O'Connell St. ☎ 01/878-6000. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Harvey Nichols

With a sumptuous (and pricey) food market in the basement, the famous London store is the main draw in the new Dundrum mall, south of the city center. It's very hip, fashionable, and label-conscious, with a restaurant for "ladies who lunch." Dundrum Town Centre, Sandyford Rd. ☎ 01/291-0488. AE, DC, MC, V. Luas: Balally.

Fashion & Clothing

★★ BT2

This offshoot of Brown Thomas, the high-end department store right across the street (see p 86), is like its younger, hipper cousin; the look is sportier, more casual, and geared to the younger, hopelessly cool set. The prices are almost as crazy though. 28-29 Grafton St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/605-6666. AE, MC, V.

★★ Design Centre

This is the best one-stop shop if you want to find all of Ireland's hottest contemporary designers—including Louise Kennedy, Mary Gregory, Karen Millen, Mary Grant, and Sharon Hoey—under one roof. Prices are generally high, but there are good bargains to be had during sale seasons and on the seconds rack. Powerscourt Townhouse, Dublin 2. ☎ 01/679-5718. AE, MC, V.

Dublin Woollen Mills

Since 1888, this shop has been a leading source of Aran sweaters, vests, hats, jackets, and scarves, as well as lamb's-wool sweaters, kilts, ponchos, and tweeds at competitive prices. The shop is right next to the Ha'penny Bridge. 41-42 Lower Ormond Quay, Dublin 1. ☎ 01/828-0301. www.woollenmills.com. MC, V.

Emma

This gorgeous boutique sells flowing, feminine designs with stylish accessories. You pretty much know that you'll get a unique outfit here. 33 Clarendon St. ☎ 01/633-9781. MC, V.

★★ Jenny Vander

This is where actresses and models come to find stylish vintage clothing. There are plenty of jeweled frocks, vintage day wear, and stunning costume jewelry filling the clothing racks and display cases. 20 Market Arcade, S. Great Georges St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-0406. MC, V.

★ Louis Copeland

The top tailors here have stitched suits for

generations and are famed throughout Ireland. The shop carries labels such as Hugo Boss and snazzy Duchamp ties. 39-41 Capel St. ☎ 01/872-1600. www.louiscopeand.com. AE, MC, V.

★ Monaghan's

Established in 1960 and operated by two generations of the Monaghan family, this store is a prime source of cashmere sweaters for men and women. It has a good selection of colors, sizes, and styles. There's another store at 4-5 Royal Hibernian Way, off Dawson Street (☎ 01/679-4451). 15-17 Grafton Arcade, Grafton St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-0823. MC, V.

Gourmet Food

★ Butlers Chocolate Café

Still using the original recipes created by Mrs. Bailey-Butler back in the 1930s, the small stores around town sell their gorgeous chocs by the box or individually, including orange marzipan, *cerise au kirsch*, and Irish cream liqueur. The shop also sells freshly brewed coffee. 51A Grafton St. ☎ 01/616-7004. www.butlerschocolates.com. AE, MC, V.

★★★ Fallon & Byrne

This is the mother of all Dublin food halls. With everything from designer truffles and fresh fruit tarts to old-fashioned sweets, cheese, and charcuterie, this shop has the selection of a supermarket but the class of a boutique. 11-17 Exchequer St. ☎ 01/472-1010. www.fallonandbyrne.com. MC, V.

★★ Sheridan's Cheesemongers

This is a great place to stock up for a top-class picnic with nearly 100 cheeses from around the world, including Irish cheeses such as Wicklow Blue Brie and Knockanore Smoked. It also has a select few items such as Ortiz tuna, Aran smoked salmon, olives, and breads. Try the take-away sandwiches at lunchtime. 11 S. Anne St. ☎ 01/679-3143. www.sheridanscheesemongers.com. MC, V.

Household & Crafts

★★★ Avoca Handweavers

This place is a wonderland of vivid colors, soft, intricately woven fabrics, blankets, throws, light woolen sweaters, children's clothes, and toys. All the fabrics are created in the Vale of Avoca in the Wicklow Mountains. You'll also find colorful pottery, sparkling jewelry, art, food, and adorable little things you really don't need but

can't live without. The top-floor **cafe** is a great place for lunch (p 91). 11-13 Suffolk St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-4215. www.avoca.ie. AE, MC, V.

★ The Drawing Room

What a good idea: This unusual little place looks like an antique store until you realize that everything is a reproduction. Lamps, mirrors, funky little gifts, and plenty of unusual photo frames. 29 Westbury Mall. ☎ 01/677-2083. AE, MC, V.

Memorabilia

This quirky market stall sells retro posters, famous Guinness ads, Jameson advertising plates, and framed photos. It's great for stocking up on small gifts. Unit 7, George's St. Arcade. No credit cards.

★★ Powerscourt Townhouse Centre

Housed in a restored 1774 townhouse, this four-story complex consists of a central sky-lit courtyard and more than 60 boutiques, craft shops, art galleries, snack bars, wine bars, and restaurants. 59 S. William St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/671-7000. www.powerscourtcentre.com. AE, MC, V.

★ Tower Craft Design Centre

This beautifully restored 1862 sugar refinery now houses a nest of craft workshops where you can watch the artisans at work. The merchandise ranges from fine-art greeting cards and hand-marbled stationery to pottery, knitwear, hand-painted silks, silver and gold Celtic jewelry, and heraldic gifts. Pearse St. (off Grand Canal Quay), Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-5655. AE, MC, V.

Jewelry

Costelloe & Costelloe

This charming little shop is filled with irresistible trinkets, handbags, colorful wraps, and jewelry, much of which is mercifully inexpensive. 14A Chatham St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/671-4209. www.costelloeandcostelloe.com. MC, V.

★★ DESIGNyard

This beautiful emporium showcases exquisite, often affordable work from the best contemporary Irish jewelry designers. All exhibited pieces are for sale. 48-49 Nassau St., Temple Bar, Dublin 8. ☎ 01/474-1011. www.designyard.ie. MC, V.

★ Gollum's Precious

This little store with the oh-so-good name is a great place to shop for designer jewelry from all over the world, but especially Paris. It's high fashion but good quality, using unusual ma-

terials such as plated glass and colorful silver designs. 1st floor, Powerscourt Centre. ☎ 01/670-5400. MC, V.

Rhinestones

This place glitters, but don't be fooled—the prices indicate that nothing here is really gold. Walsh is considered Ireland's top designer of costume jewelry, much of which has an antique feel. 18 Andrews St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/475-5031. MC, V.

★★ Weir and Sons

Established in 1869, this is the granddaddy of Dublin's fine jewelry shops. It sells new and antique jewelry, as well as silver, china, and crystal. There is a second branch at the ILAC Centre, Henry Street (☎ 01/872-9588). 96 Grafton St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-9678. www.weirandsons.ie. MC, V.

Kids

The Doll Store

This shop carries a large range of top-quality miniatures to furnish a doll's house, plus traditional teddy bears and celebrity dolls. You can even “create a doll,” choosing body, hair, features, and clothes. You may have difficulty dragging the kids out of here. 62 S. Great George's St. ☎ 01/478-3403. www.dollstore.ie. MC, V.

★★ Milk & Cookies

This new clothes store for young kids is designer without being flashy. Expensive but utterly charming styles are more like miniatures of good-taste adults' clothes in top-quality fabrics. It's great if you don't mind spending lots of money on the little ones. Westbury Mall. ☎ 01/671-0104. MC, V.

Markets & Malls

Blackrock Market

This market is frustratingly small but destined to grow. A few dozen clothes, jewelry, food, and gift stalls are split between outdoor and indoor sections. A recent change in management has brought with it ambitions to improve the selection. 19 A Main St., Blackrock Village. ☎ 01/283-3522. www.blackrockmarket.com. No credit cards. DART to Blackrock.

Dundrum Town Centre

This huge mall south of the city center is easily accessible by tram. It specializes in popular high-street chains such as Esprit, French Connection, Mexx, and Zara, with jewelers, restaurants, kids'

gear, sportswear, and stationery. Harvey Nichols is the highlight for many. Sandyford Rd. ☎ 01/299-1700. www.dundrum.ie. MC, V. Luas: Balally.

★ **George's St. Arcade**

This old red-brick Victorian meat market is now home to quirky stalls, secondhand records, hats, health food, jewelry, and kooky clothes. S. Great George's St. www.georgesstreetarcade.ie. Some MC, V.

Temple Bar Book Market

This small but well-chosen selection of secondhand books, mainly by Irish authors, can be found in the middle of busy Temple Bar every Saturday. It also has a small number of CDs and vinyl. Temple Bar Sq. No credit cards.

Temple Bar Food Market

Every Saturday, Meeting House Square in Temple Bar fills with stalls selling organic fruit and vegetables, cheeses, homemade breads, Irish cakes, and freshly cooked snacks. A relatively new concept here, it so far seems to attract more visitors than locals. Meeting House Sq., Temple Bar. No credit cards.

Music

★ **The Celtic Note**

Second only to Claddagh Records (below), this is a terrific source of recorded Irish music in Dublin. The staff is experienced and helpful, and you can listen to a CD before purchasing it. You'll pay full price here, but you're likely to find what you're looking for. 12 Nassau St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/670-4157. MC, V.

★★ **Claddagh Records**

Renowned among insiders in traditional Irish music circles, this is where to find "the genuine article" in traditional music and perhaps discover a new favorite. Not only is the staff knowledgeable and enthusiastic about new artists, but they're able to tell you which venues and pubs are hosting the best music sessions that week. Dame St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-8943. www.claddaghrecords.com. MC, V.

Shoes & Accessories

★ **China Blue** This very offbeat selection of shoes and boots for men and women includes designs from Dr. Martens, Miss Sixty, Caterpillar, and Ben Sherman. Merchant's Arch. ☎ 01/671-8785. MC, V.



> A cheesemonger at the Temple Bar Food Market.

★★ **Mad Hatter** This shop sells fantastic hats and headgear from young designer Nessa Cronin, who uses incredible fabrics such as **sinamay** (banana plant) to make glamorous and quirky creations, suitable for the mother of the bride or a day at the races. A dress designers' dream. 20 Lower Stephen St. ☎ 01/405-4936. AE, MC, V.



Dublin Restaurant Best Bets

Most Atmospheric Dining Room

Chapter One \$\$\$\$ 18–19 Parnell Sq. (p 94)

Best Hearty Soup

Gruel \$ 68A Dame St. (p 95)

Best Asian Food

Café Mao \$\$ 2 Chatham Row (p 94)

Best Place to Live Out Your Bohemian Fantasy

Bewley's Mezzanine Café \$ 78–79 Grafton St. (p 91)

Best Breakfast for a Sweet Tooth

Lemon \$ 60 Dawson St. (p 96)

Best Lunch for the Undecided

Epicurean Food Hall \$ Abbey St. (p 95)

Best Afternoon Tea

Queen of Tarts \$\$ 4 Cork Hill, Dame St. (p 98)

Best Hangout for Film Buffs

Irish Film Centre Cafe Bar \$\$ 6 Eustace St. (p 96)

Best Journey to India

Jaipur \$\$\$ 1 S. Great George's St. (p 96)

Best Fish and Chips

Leo Burdock \$ 2 Werburgh St. (p 96)

Most Authentic Italian

Nonna Valentina \$\$ 1–2 Portobello Rd. (p 98)

Most Comfy Floor Cushions

Chameleon \$\$\$ 1 Lower Fownes St. (p 94)

Most Surprisingly Inexpensive Lunch Menu

Eden \$\$\$ Meeting House Sq. (entrance on Sycamore St.) (p 95)

Best Wine List

L'Ecrivain \$\$\$\$ 109A Lower Baggot St. (p 96)

Best Midprice Bistro

French Paradox \$\$\$ 53 Shelbourne Rd. (p 95)

Best Museum Café

Silk Road Café \$ Chester Beatty Library, Dublin Castle (p 98)

Best for Star Spotting

The Tea Room \$\$\$\$ Clarence Hotel, 6–8 Wellington Quay (p 99)

Best Sea View

Aqua \$\$\$\$ 1 West Pier, Howth (p 91)

Best Healthy Fast Food

Wagamama \$\$ S. King St. (p 99)

Best Upmarket Snacks

Enoteca Delle Langhe \$\$ Blooms Lane (p 95)

Best for Closet Vegetarians

Cornucopia \$\$ 19 Wicklow St. (p 94)

Most Eccentric Pizza Toppings

Gotham Café \$\$ 8 S. Anne St. (p 95)

Most Accommodating Chef

Lobster Pot \$\$\$ 9 Ballsbridge Terrace (p 96)

> *Leo Burdock is a favorite for take-away fish and chips.*



Dublin Restaurants A to Z

★★ **101 Talbot** *INTERNATIONAL*

This modest, second-floor eatery above a shop may be unassuming, but don't be fooled—it's actually a bright beacon of good cooking on the Northside. The menu features light, healthy food, with a strong emphasis on vegetarian dishes. The dining room is casually funky, with contemporary Irish art and big windows. The staff are endlessly friendly, making it a pleasure to visit. 101 Talbot St. (at Talbot Lane near Marlborough St.) ☎ 01/874-5011. Entrees €15–€22. AE, MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sat.

★★ **Aqua** *SEAFOOD*

A waterfront restaurant in the renovated old building of a sailing club, Aqua serves top-quality fresh local seafood, washed down with an impressive wine list. Reserve a table by the window; the view is to die for. 1 West Pier, Howth. ☎ 01/832-0690. www.aqua.ie. Entrees €25–€45. AE, MC, V. Lunch Tues–Sun, dinner daily.

★★ **kids Avoca Café** *IRISH/EUROPEAN*

Who would guess that one of the best places to have lunch in all of Dublin is on the third floor of a shop? If you can tear yourself away from the shopping, you'll find thick homemade soups, fresh salads, and big sandwiches. 11–13 Suffolk St. ☎ 01/672-6019. www.avoca.ie. Entrees €8–€19. DC, MC, V. Breakfast & lunch daily, Thurs until 8pm.

★ **The Bad Ass Café** *AMERICAN*

This loud, bright restaurant has been packing in tourists and local families for more than 20 years now. The draw is the approachable menu with the familiar burgers, pasta, steaks, salads, and fajitas that you'll recognize from back home. Reportedly, Sinéad O'Connor used to wait tables here. 9–11 Crown Alley. ☎ 01/671-2596. www.badasscafe.com. Entrees €10–€18. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Bewley's Mezzanine Café** *CAFE*

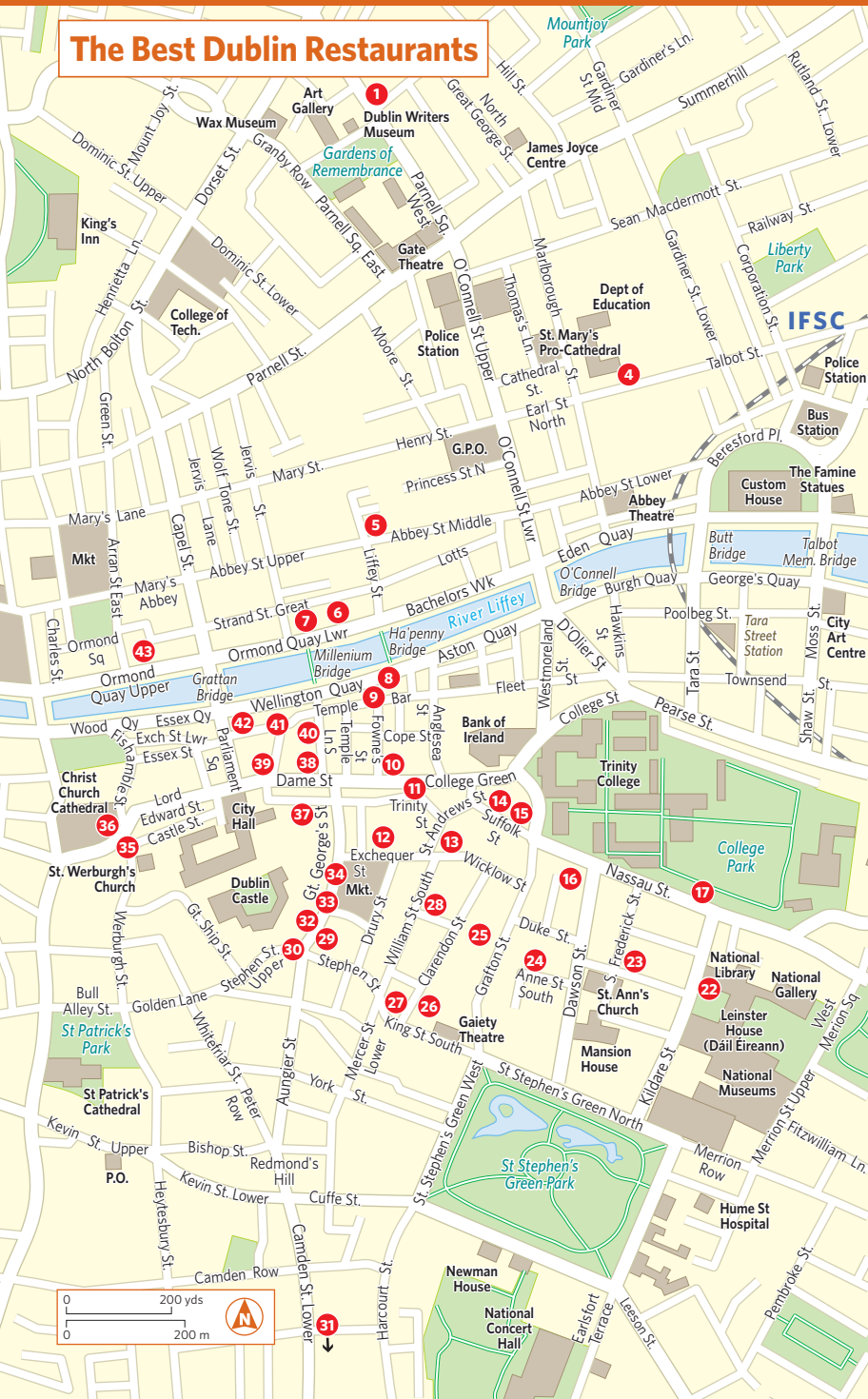
Not the place it once was—the original closed in 2004, only to be reopened a year later. As reinventions go it's a pretty good one, but we still miss the original. Pastries, coffee, and a full bar are accessible all day, together with a small, Mediterranean-inspired menu. 78–79 Grafton St. ☎ 01/672-7720. www.bewleys.com. AE, MC, V. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ **kids Brasserie Sixty6** *IRISH/EUROPEAN*

Lively and informal atmosphere with uncluttered decor. It's popular for affordable comfort-food-with-a-twist, such as the famous rotisserie chicken or the brunch with homemade sausage and mash. 66–67 S. Great Georges St. ☎ 01/400-5878. www.brasseriesixty6.com. Entrees €10–€15. AE, DC, MC, V. Breakfast & dinner daily, lunch Mon–Fri, brunch Sat–Sun.

> *The Bad Ass Café—it's in the name.*

The Best Dublin Restaurants





101 Talbot **4**
 Aqua **2**
 Avoca Café **14**
 The Bad Ass Café **9**
 Bewley's Mezzanine
 Café **25**
 Brasserie Sixty6 **34**
 Café Léon **11**
 Café Mao **27**
 Chameleon **8**
 Chapter One **1**
 Cornucopia **13**
 Dobbins Wine Bistro **20**
 Eden **41**
 Ely CHQ **3**
 Enoteca Delle Langhe **7**

Epicurean
 Food Hall **5**
 Fallon & Byrne **12**
 French Paradox **18**
 Gotham Café **24**
 Govindas **30**
 Gruel **39**
 Halo **43**
 Irish Film Centre
 Cafe Bar **40**
 Jaipur **33**
 Juice **32**
 L'Ecrivain **21**
 Lemon **16**
 Leo Burdock **35**
 Lobster Pot **19**

Lord Edward **36**
 Mermaid Café **10**
 Mimo Café **28**
 National Museum
 Café **22**
 Nonna Valentina **31**
 Nude **15**
 One Pico **23**
 The Pig's Ear **17**
 Queen of Tarts **38**
 Silk Road Café **37**
 The Tea Room **42**
 Wagamama **26**
 The Winding Stair **6**
 Yamamori
 Noodles **29**



Kids Café Léon CAFE

It's easy to pretend you're in Paris in this chic little cafe with homemade pastries, fresh sandwiches on focaccia, and baguettes all the way from France. Near the tourist office, it's great for a rest between sightseeing stops. 15 Trinity St. ☎ 01/677-1060. Sandwiches €5–€8. AE, MC, V. Breakfast & lunch daily.

Café Mao ASIAN

This is where to go when you crave some Asian cooking with an exhilarating attitude. The menu reads like a “best of Asia”: Thai fish cakes, *nasi goreng*, chicken hoisin, salmon ramen. Everything is delicious—you can't go wrong. 2 Chatham Row. ☎ 01/670-4899. www.cafemao.com. Entrees €10–€19. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Chameleon INDONESIAN**

Sink into purple cushions amid deep red walls for a full-on Far Eastern experience. The Temple Bar cobbles seem far away when you're digging into the *Risttafels*, the traditional Indonesian set meal that includes dishes of meat, noodles, vegetables, and seafood in lightly spiced sauces. It's very busy on weekends. 1 Lower Fownes St., Temple Bar. ☎ 01/671-0362. www.chameleonrestaurant.com. Set meals €30–€40. MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sat.

★★★ **Chapter One FRENCH**

Arguably the city's most atmospheric restaurant, this remarkable eatery fills the vaulted basement space of the Dublin Writers Museum. Artfully lighted and tastefully decorated, it offers outstanding modern Irish cuisine, although prices are very high for what's on offer. Meals are prepared with local, organic ingredients. Booking is essential. 18-19 Parnell Sq. ☎ 01/873-2266. www.chapteronerestaurant.com. Entrees €32–€40; fixed-price lunch/early-bird dinner €37; tasting menu €85. MC, V. Lunch Tues–Fri, dinner Tues–Sat.

★★★ **Cornucopia VEGETARIAN**

Enough to convert a wavering carnivore, this restaurant has been recently extended and is still packed at lunchtime. Queue at the counter and take your pick from a plethora of soups, unusual salads, and daily hot dishes, washed down with fresh juices. It's a fabulous value—just don't come for a leisurely romantic meal.

➤ **TOP TO BOTTOM** Chapter One; Cornucopia; Epicurean Food Hall.

19 Wicklow St. ☎ 01/677-7583. www.cornucopia.ie. Entrees €10–€13. DC. Breakfast Mon–Sat, Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Dobbins Wine Bistro** *BISTRO*

Almost hidden in a lane between Upper and Lower Mount streets, this hip, friendly bistro is a haven for inventive Continental cuisine. The menu changes often, but it usually includes such items as duckling with orange and port sauce or steamed **paupiette** of black sole with salmon, crab, and prawn filling. 15 Stephen's Lane (off Upper Mount St.). ☎ 01/676-4679. Entrees €15–€24. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Tues–Sat.

★★★ **Eden** *INTERNATIONAL/MEDITERRANEAN*

This is one of Temple Bar's hippest restaurants, a cool minimalist space with an open-plan kitchen overlooking Meeting House Square. The food is influenced by the global village, and the chef has a special penchant for Mediterranean flavors and local seafood. **Tip:** The fixed-price lunch is a particularly good value. Meeting House Sq. (entrance on Sycamore St.). ☎ 01/670-5372. www.edenrestaurant.ie. Entrees €19–€30; fixed-price lunch menu €22 (2 courses). AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★ **kids Ely CHQ** *MODERN EUROPEAN*

Located in the old Customs and Excise warehouse (check out the renovated basement vaults), this small chain does fabulous wine by the glass with marinated grilled whole squid or bouillabaisse. Informal, friendly, and very contemporary, it has a large terrace and children's menu. Customs House Quay. ☎ 01/672-0010. www.elywinebar.ie. Entrees €15–€30. AE, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri, dinner daily, brunch Sat–Sun.

★★ **Enoteca Delle Langhe** *ITALIAN*

Lunchtime here features bowls of hearty pasta, replaced with platters of meats and cheeses in the evenings. In their words, it's "food to accompany the wine," and plenty of it. Tucked away in Quartier Bloom, the tiny Italian quarter, the place has a rustic informal feel, friendly staff, and lovely little courtyard. Blooms Lane. ☎ 01/888-0834. Entrees €8–€12; platters €10. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★ **kids Epicurean Food Hall** *ASSORTED*

This wonderful food hall houses a wide variety of artisan produce, delicious local Irish meats, and regional specialties. The central communal tables fill up quickly at lunchtime. Entrances:

Abbey St. & Liffey St. No phone. Entrees €3–€12. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

Fallon & Byrne *MODERN FRENCH/IRISH*

The top floor of the food emporium has a spacious interior and huge windows. Its menu changes seasonally but always has oysters and 28-day aged Wexford beef. Come for an upmarket burger, plush caviar, and white onion and truffle soup. 11-17 Exchequer St. ☎ 01/472-1010. www.fallonandbyrne.com. Entrees €15–€30. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★ **French Paradox** *FRENCH*

This is just what Dublin needed: a price-conscious, darling little bistro and wine bar that endears itself to everyone. There's a lovely cheese plate and superb Iberico hams from Spain, or, if you prefer, the small dining menu offers bistro favorites such as gravlax and blinis. 53 Shelbourne Rd. ☎ 01/660-4068. www.thefrenchparadox.com. Entrees €12–€35; platters €12–€25. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★ **kids Gotham Café** *PIZZA*

With its funky interior, with magazine-covered walls and a small covered terrace, this cafe is always busy. Pizzas here have unusual toppings that will offend purists (hummus! Thai curry!) but are always fresh and crisp. There are also steaks and salads on offer. Good for a Grafton Street lunch; highchairs available. 8 S. Anne St. ☎ 01/679-5266. Entrees €10–€18. AE, MC, V. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

kids Govindas *INDIAN VEGETARIAN*

Everything in this Hare Krishna cafe/restaurant is pure vegetarian, and nothing is too spicy to blow your ears off. Daily hot dishes include several curries, rice, lentil dhal, and pasta—all as cheap as it is tasty. All together now: Ommm. 4 Aungier St. ☎ 01/475-0309. www.govindas.ie. Entrees €10; take-away tray €6. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **kids Gruel** *SOUPS*

Huge tureens of soup and stews with a hunk of fresh bread make for a tasty meal. Wooden tables, walls covered with gig flyers, and a friendly, slightly shabby air make this a huge draw for students, arty types, shoppers, and those sick of spending big money for a so-so meal. Plenty for vegetarians. 68A Dame St. ☎ 01/670-7119. Entrees €8–€15. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Halo MODERN EUROPEAN**

As you enter you can't help but notice the astounding sculpture caricature that sets the tone of this hip restaurant. Not that it should distract you: Sink into the comfy faux antique chairs and savor elegant dishes such as coriander-crusted monkfish or spiced roast duck. **Morrison Hotel, Ormond Quay.** ☎ 01/887-2400. www.morrisonhotel.ie. Entrees €25–€32. AE, DC, MC, V. Breakfast & dinner daily.

★ **Irish Film Centre Cafe Bar IRISH/INTERNATIONAL** This hip little eatery in the lobby of the city's coolest place to watch a movie features an excellent, affordable menu that changes daily. A vegetarian and Middle Eastern menu is available for both lunch and dinner. The weekend entertainment usually includes music or comedy. **6 Eustace St., Temple Bar.** ☎ 01/677-8788. Entrees €9–€12. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★★ **Jaipur INDIAN**

One of Dublin's best Indian restaurants, this was the original in what is now a small chain. Try the tasting menu if you're not familiar with Indian cuisine; it contains a medley of starters, mains, and desserts, from Goan seafood curry to slow-cooked chicken in yogurt and cashews, with good vegetarian alternatives. **1 S. Great George's St.** ☎ 01/677-0999. www.jaipur.ie. Entrees €15–€25. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily.

★ **Juice VEGETARIAN**

If nobody told you this place was vegetarian, you'd probably never notice, so interesting is the menu. Brunch is classic here, with pancakes, *huevos rancheros*, and French toast topped with fresh fruit or organic maple syrup. The lunch and dinner menus are tasty and inventive. True to its name, Juice also offers about 30 kinds of juices and smoothies. **Castle House, 73–83 S. Great Georges St.** ☎ 01/475-7856. www.juiceresaurant.ie. Entrees €12–€14. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★ **L'Ecrivain FRENCH/MODERN IRISH**

Serving haute, Michelin-starred French cuisine, this place is a treat. Typical dishes might be foie gras with cardamom and fig chutney, or West Coast lobster with basil purée, all with an exceptional wine list; the lunch menu is more affordable. A pianist plays nightly, imparting even more of a decadent air. Advance booking is essential. **109A Lower Baggot St.** ☎ 01/661-

1919. www.lecrivain.com. Entrees €40–€55; tasting menu €120; set lunch €35. AE, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri; dinner Mon–Sat.

★ **kids Lemon PANCAKES**

The kids are bound to drag you to this one with its bright orange interior and fresh crêpes with a dazzling array of fillings. Go sensible and have a savory filling for breakfast (mushrooms and eggs) or dive into chocolate and banana. Waffles come with fruit, ice cream, and most things naughty, and the coffee's good too. **60 Dawson St.** ☎ 01/672-8898. www.lemonco.com. Crêpes €4–€10. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Leo Burdock FISH AND CHIPS**

Cabinet ministers, university students, and Hollywood stars alike can be found at the counter here, waiting for take-away fish bought fresh that morning and good Irish potatoes, both cooked in “drippings” (none of that modern cooking oil). There's no seating, but you can sit on a nearby bench or stroll down to the park at St. Patrick's Cathedral. **2 Werburgh St.** ☎ 01/454-0306. Entrees €6–€8. No credit cards. Lunch & dinner (til midnight) Mon–Sat; dinner (til midnight) Sun.

★★ **Lobster Pot SEAFOOD**

It takes a brave restaurant to bring a tray of neatly presented raw fish to each diner before ordering, but the head waiter does just that, explaining the menu and also accepting personal requests. Featuring fresh catch from Wrights of Howth, dishes include dressed crab, sole *goujons*, lobster thermidor, and grilled turbot. **9 Ballsbridge Terrace.** ☎ 01/668-0025. www.thelobsterpot.ie. Entrees €22–€40. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri; dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Lord Edward SEAFOOD**

Established in 1890, this cozy place claims to be Dublin's oldest seafood restaurant. Fresh fish—from salmon to prawns and sea trout to plaice, sole, and turbot—is served grilled, fried, *meunière*, or poached. Vegetarian dishes are also available. At lunch, the bar sells simpler fare. If you're overcome with the need for posh seafood when the pubs have shut, you're in luck—it's open until 12:30am Fridays and Saturdays. **23 Christ Church Place.** ☎ 01/454-2420. Entrees €16–€30; fixed-price dinner €35. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

➤ *Cheeky service comes free with your fish and chips at Leo Burdock.*



★★ Mermaid Café MODERN

Owned by a chef and an artist, this popular eatery is a mixture of good restaurant and classy hangout. It's a lunchtime favorite of local professionals and a good place to take a date in the evening. Dishes on the frequently changing menu include the likes of slow-roasted pork belly and an array of excellent seafood dishes, including a rich seafood casserole. 69-70 Dame St. ☎ 01/670-8236. www.mermaid.ie. Entrees €20-€30. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily (brunch from 12:30pm Sun).

Mimo Café EUROPEAN

Even if you don't come for the food, come for the venue on the first floor of the vast Powerscourt Townhouse atrium. You can dine on pasta, seafood, or sandwiches, while surrounded by three floors of boutique shops and funky sculptures. 1st floor, Powerscourt Townhouse, 59 S. William St. ☎ 01/679-4160. Entrees €12-€14. AE, MC, V. Breakfast Mon-Sat; lunch daily until 5pm.

National Museum Café CAFETERIA

This is a great place to step out of the rain, warm yourself, and then wander among the nation's treasures. The soup of the day is often vegetarian and quite good. National Museum of Ireland, Kildare St. ☎ 01/677-7444. Soup €3; lunch entrees under €8. MC, V. Lunch daily.

Nonna Valentina ITALIAN

This place serves wonderfully authentic Italian dishes of antipasto, simply cooked fresh sea trout, or roast guinea fowl. Try for a table overlooking the Grand Canal for the most romantic view. 1-2 Portobello Rd. ☎ 01/454-9866. www.nonna-valentina.ie. Entrees €20-€26. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

Nude VEGETARIAN

This small chain with sleek little outlets all around town is an excellent place to grab lunch or a snack without blowing your diet. The emphasis here is on healthy foods, from the freshly squeezed juices down to the wraps (chickpea and chili is a longtime favorite), sandwiches, soups, salads, and sweets. Branches are also at 103 Lower Leeson St., 38 Upper Baggot St., and 28 Grafton St. 21 Suffolk St., Trinity College. ☎ 01/677-4804. www.nude.ie. Entrees €4-€6. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily (closes 7pm Sun).

*In Dublin's fair city, where girls are so pretty,
I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone,
As she wheeled her wheelbarrow through
streets broad and narrow,*

Crying, Cockles and mussels! alive, alive, oh!

TRADITIONAL

★★ One Pico MODERN EUROPEAN

This is a sophisticated, grown-up, classy place, with excellent service and fantastic food. The cuisine is a mix of European influences, and the menu changes daily. If you're lucky, you might find the duck confit with red cabbage and beet-root chiffonade, or the roast pheasant with red-wine risotto. 5-6 Molesworth Place. ☎ 01/676-0300. www.onepico.com. Entrees €30-€37. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon-Sat.

★★ The Pig's Ear MODERN IRISH

This stylish, modern restaurant is stepping into the shoes of the much-missed Jacob's Ladder. Head chef Stephen McAllister (of the superb One Pico) is something of a TV celebrity in these parts, although most customers are too cool to turn their heads if he puts in an appearance. The menu is an imaginative modern interpretation of traditional Irish cuisine; classics such as shepherd's pie are offset by the occasional dish out of left field, such as the house terrine appetizer with tea and prune chutney and crispy ears. The staff here are lovely, the view of Trinity College from the upstairs dining room is handsome, and prices are fully reasonable. 4-5 Nassau St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/670-3865. www.thepigsear.ie. Reservations required. Main courses €17-€23; fixed-price dinner €44. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon-Sat.

★★ Queen of Tarts CAFE

This tiny tearoom is one of our favorite places to blow the diet on decadent cakes and cookies, with a pot of tea on the side to make it all legal. Delicious, hearty breakfasts and light lunches are also served. Inch your way to one of the few tables (it's usually packed) and give in to temptation. 4 Cork Hill, Dame St. ☎ 01/670-7499. Items €2-€5. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ Silk Road Café

MEDITERRANEAN/MIDDLE EAST

Inside the gorgeous Chester Beatty Library, this informal spacious cafe features the creations of Middle Eastern chefs, sold at remarkably



> *French Paradox finesses Ireland's freshest fish, meats, and cheeses.*

good value. Peruse the display counter, and then choose from suitably diverse offerings of moussaka, Turkish chicken, and fresh salads. Relaxing, friendly, and charming. Dublin Castle. ☎ 01/407-0770. www.silkroadcafe.ie. Entrees €5–€10. DC, MC, V. Lunch Tues–Sun.

*** **The Tea Room** *MODERN EUROPEAN*
This ultrasmart restaurant in the U2-owned Clarence hotel is guaranteed to deliver one of your most memorable meals in Ireland. The cooking is complex but controlled: filet of John Dory with wild mushroom and razor clams, or red leg partridge with juniper-flavored *jus*. There's a fixed-price "Simply Cooked" menu, offering more straightforward fare for €39—although not on Friday or Saturday nights. Clarence Hotel, 6–8 Wellington Quay. ☎ 01/407-0800. www.theclarence.ie. Entrees €28–€40; 2-course set lunch €26. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

kids Wagamama *JAPANESE*

Fast food meets healthy eating. Queue up to share long communal tables, and dive into fresh noodle soups and stir-fries with Asian flavors. It's noisy, popular, and great for kids. Food

comes quickly and all day, so it's perfect for an affordable and hearty fill. S. King St. ☎ 01/478-2152. www.wagamama.ie. Entrees €10–€16. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★ **The Winding Stair** *MODERN IRISH*

This revamped restaurant above the famous bookshop has huge picture windows overlooking the Liffey, so the busy little dining room is fresh and bright. Food is simple, such as potted Kerry crab and soda bread or pan-fried plaice with caper butter. 40 Ormond Quay. ☎ 01/872-7320. www.winding-stair.com. Entrees €18–€24. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **kids Yamamori** *Noodles JAPANESE*

This place has such a casually exuberant atmosphere that you just may be startled by how good the food is. Prices range from bargain-rate to splurge-pricey for dishes like chile chicken ramen or the *yamamori yaki soba* with its mound of wok-fried noodles, piled high with prawns, squid, chicken, and roast pork. 71–72 S. Great Georges St. ☎ 01/475-5001. www.yamamori-noodles.ie. Entrees €15–€24. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.



Dublin Hotel Best Bets

Most Dramatic Exterior

Schoolhouse Hotel \$\$\$\$ 2-8 Northumberland Rd. (p 108)

Most Historic Bedroom

The Shelbourne \$\$\$\$ 27 St. Stephen's Green (p 108)

Most Effortlessly Cool

The Clarence \$\$\$\$ 6-8 Wellington Quay (p 104)

Best Views Without Paying a Fortune

Grand Canal Hotel \$\$\$ Grand Canal St. Upper (p 105)

Best In-House Art Gallery

Merrion Hotel \$\$\$\$ Upper Merrion St. (p 106)

Best for Trendy Socialites

Dylan \$\$\$\$ Eastmoreland Place (p 105)

Best Cheap Apartment

Kingfisher Guesthouse & Apartments \$\$ 166 Parnell St. (p 106)

Most Typically Temple Bar

Eliza Lodge \$\$ 23-24 Wellington Quay, Temple Bar (p 105)

Most Authentic Georgian Atmosphere

Trinity Lodge \$\$\$ 12 S. Frederick St. (p 109)

Most Illustrious Bed

Browne's Townhouse \$\$\$ 22 St. Stephens Green (p 101)

Best Supercheap Option

Isaacs Hostel \$ 2-5 Frenchman's Lane (p 106)

Best for Supercool Design Touches

Morrison Hotel \$\$\$\$ Ormond Quay (p 106)

Best Park Views

The Fitzwilliam \$\$\$\$ St. Stephen's Green (p 105)

Best Outside-the-Box Way to Save Money

Trinity College \$\$ College Green (p 109)

Best Kids' Swimming Pool

Camden Court Hotel \$\$ Lower Camden St. (p 104)

Best Live Music

The Westbury \$\$\$\$ Grafton St. (p 109)

Best Value Penthouse

Herbert Park \$\$\$ Herbert Park, off Anglesea Rd., Ballsbridge (p 105)

Best for Well-Heeled Families

Four Seasons \$\$\$\$ Simmonscourt Rd., Ballsbridge (p 105)

Best for Political Skulduggery

Buswells Hotel \$\$ 23-27 Molesworth St. (p 101)

Best New Lease on Life for a Bank

Westin \$\$\$\$ College Green, Westmoreland St. (p 109)

Best Old Dublin Landmark

The Gresham \$\$\$\$ 23 Upper O'Connell St. (p 105)

Best-Smelling Lobby

Number 31 \$\$\$\$ 31 Leeson Close (p 107)

> A suite at the U2-approved Clarence.



Dublin Hotels A to Z

Abbott Lodge

Rooms at this friendly, historic guesthouse have wonderful architectural flourishes, such as high ceilings and original cornices. The staff are genuinely friendly and will fill you in on the neighborhood's offerings, including the best pubs and restaurants nearby. Rooms facing the street can be noisy, so ask for a room at the back if you're a light sleeper. 87-88 Lower Gardiner St. ☎ 01/836-5548. www.abbott-lodge.com. 17 units. Double €90-€120. AE, MC, V.

Avalon House

This warm and friendly hostel in a beautiful old red-brick building is well known among budget travelers. Its pine floors, high ceilings, and open fireplace make it a pleasant place in which to relax. Most accommodations are in dorms of varying sizes, with a few single and twin bedded rooms available, too. There's no curfew, but passes must be shown on entry after 9pm. 55 Aungier St. ☎ 01/475-0001. www.avalon-house.ie. 12 units. Double w/private bathroom €15-€38 per person. AE, MC, V.

★★ Browne's Townhouse

If you love luxury but hate big chain hotels, look no further. Originally a gentleman's club, Browne's is now a small, classy boutique hotel. The 11 guest rooms are sumptuously decorated with period furnishings, marble bathrooms, and unique architectural details. If you splurge on the Thomas Leighton suite, you'll sleep on a king-size mahogany bed that once belonged to Marilyn Monroe. 22 St. Stephen's Green. ☎ 01/638-3939. www.brownesdublin.com. 11 units. Double €180-€280. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Buswells Hotel

The spacious, slightly masculine rooms at this traditional hotel are spread throughout three Georgian buildings—which can make finding your room a challenge after a few pints of Guinness. But it's worth the wandering. It has a unique style and ambience, in part because the location near the Irish government buildings makes the bar a hotbed of political intrigue. 23-27 Molesworth St. ☎ 01/614-6500. www.buswellshotel.com. 69 units. Double €140-€190. AE, DC, MC, V.

> *In the lap of luxury at the Four Seasons.*

The Best Dublin Hotels



- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Abbott Lodge 3 | Grand Canal Hotel 34 | Park Inn 12 |
| Avalon House 15 | The Gresham 2 | Premier Suites |
| Browne's Townhouse 20 | Harding Hotel 13 | Stephen's Hall 23 |
| Buswells Hotel 19 | Herbert Park 31 | Schoolhouse |
| Butlers Town House 32 | Isaacs Hostel 4 | Hotel 33 |
| Camden | Jury's Inn | The Shelbourne 21 |
| Court Hotel 25 | Christchurch 14 | Temple Bar Hotel 6 |
| The Clarence 10 | Kingfisher Guesthouse & | Trinity College 7 |
| Conrad Hotel 24 | Apartment 1 | Trinity Lodge 18 |
| Dylan 29 | Merrion Hotel 22 | Waterloo House 28 |
| Eliza Lodge 9 | Mespiel Hotel 27 | The Westbury 17 |
| The Fitzwilliam 16 | Morrison Hotel 11 | Westin 8 |
| Four Seasons 30 | Number 31 26 | Wynn's Hotel 5 |





> A tidy courtyard garden at the Merrion Hotel.

★★ **Butlers Town House**

This beautifully restored Victorian town house feels like a gracious family home. The atmosphere is elegant, but comfortable; rooms are richly furnished with four-poster or half-tester beds, draped in luxurious fabrics in rich colors. The gem here, in our opinion, is the Glendalough Room, with a lovely bay window and small library; it requires booking well in advance. 44 Lansdowne Rd. ☎ 01/667-4022. www.butlers-hotel.com. 20 units. Double €110–€196. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **kids Camden Court Hotel**

Recently refurbished rooms are comfortable and simply furnished in strong colors, with all the trimmings including plasma-screen TVs. Quieter rooms overlook the courtyard, and there are large family rooms. It's not in the most fashionable part of town, but it's safe, busy, and a short walk to the center. Rare luxuries include the kids' swimming pool (plus a 16m adults' pool), sauna, steam room, and gym. Brilliant value. Lower Camden St.

☎ 01/475-9666. www.camdencourthotel.com. 246 units. Double €125–€185. AE, DC, MC, V. Luas: Harcourt.

★★★ **The Clarence**

This has been the most famous hotel in Dublin since 1992, when U2's Bono and the Edge bought it. For some, rock-star owners may not be a great selling point, but don't be put off—this is a sophisticated place. The mid-19th-century, Regency-style building was beautifully renovated, with sensitively added layers of contemporary elegance. Rooms are tastefully designed, with exceptionally comfortable, firm king-size beds. The cheery staff are on top of things and always seem to remember who you are. 6–8 Wellington Quay. ☎ 01/407-0800. www.theclarence.ie. 49 units. Double €200–€380. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Conrad Hotel**

This modern, glass-walled hotel, which sits on one corner of St. Stephen's Green, is a favorite among international and Irish business travelers, so it has all of the fast Internet

connections, big desks, and fax machines you would expect. Bedrooms are nicely done in neutral colors with big, modern bathrooms. Earlsfort Terrace. ☎ 01/676-5555. www.conradhotels.com. 198 units. Double €295–€495. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★★ Dylan

Only two things matter in this slick new boutique hotel, built in a Victorian nurses' home: how big your wallet is, and how good you look. Chanel bag? Prada skirt? Five-hundred-dollar shoes? Welcome to your new home! Families in particular might not like its party-hardy atmosphere (it has a signature cocktail—vanilla vodka with crème de banana—as well as a thumping club soundtrack). But 20-somethings line up to spend the night. Eastmoreland Place. ☎ 01/660-3000. www.dylan.ie. 44 units. Double €220–€300. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Eliza Lodge

This hotel embodies all the exuberance and zest of Temple Bar. Guest rooms are simple and attractive, with big floor-to-ceiling windows—the better to take in the impressive riverside views. It's worth paying a little extra for a penthouse room with balcony. **Note:** The windows are not soundproofed, and rooms on the lower floors can get a lot of street noise. 23–24 Wellington Quay. ☎ 01/671-8044. www.dublinlodge.com. 18 units. Double €125–€150. AE, MC, V.

★★★ The Fitzwilliam

Take an unbeatable location with sweeping views over the Green, add a Michelin-starred restaurant, throw in contemporary design by Terence Conran, and you have a hit on your hands. Rooms are unfussy with clean lines, soft creams, and chocolate browns, with an amazing power shower. The beauty is in the detail here—even the staff uniforms are custom-made by Irish designers. St. Stephen's Green. ☎ 01/478-7000. www.fitzwilliamhotel.com. 139 units. Double €225–€400. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★★ **kids** Four Seasons

If money is no object, the Four Seasons lures you like a De Beers diamond draws a socialite. This is actually an excellent option for families, as there are complimentary cribs, childproof bedrooms, and a babysitting service. A menu of children's activities will keep them occupied while you have a romantic meal or just kick

back for some quiet meditation (the better to prepare yourself for the bill). Check the website; online discounts can be very good. Simmonscourt Rd., Ballsbridge. ☎ 01/665-4000. www.fourseasons.com. 197 units. Double €295–€445. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **kids** Grand Canal Hotel

Popular with business travelers, it's a short walk from the center and next to the Grand Canal and DART coastal train. Well-furnished, the comfortable rooms are spacious and quiet, with extras such as Wi-Fi throughout and ice machines on every floor (a rarity in European hotels). Balcony rooms boast amazing views. Grand Canal St. Upper. ☎ 01/646-1000. www.grandcanalhotel.com. 142 units. Double €110–€230. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ The Gresham

This is one of Dublin's two most historic hotels, having welcomed visitors for 200 years. A lengthy renovation lasting several years has recently been completed, giving it all a badly needed makeover, and redesigned rooms are coolly done in neutral tones with big, firm beds and decent facilities, such as Wi-Fi and plasma TVs. 23 Upper O'Connell St. ☎ 01/874-6881. www.gresham-hotels.com. 298 units. Double €150–€350. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **kids** Harding Hotel

Nearby but just beyond Temple Bar's party scene, the Harding is one of the best budget hotels around. The decent-sized simple rooms were refurbished in 2007. All have fridge, kettle, small TV, and free Wi-Fi. It might not be luxury, but it's decent value, with huge triple and family rooms. Copper Alley, Fishamble St. ☎ 01/679-6500. www.hardinghotel.ie. 52 units. Double €90–€125. AE, MC, V.

★ **kids** Herbert Park

A quiet retreat outside the center that's popular with business travelers, families, or those wanting some peace. The huge marble foyer is a little soulless, but rooms are large, with contemporary decor, widescreen TVs, and broadband. For a little extra you can pay for a view onto the 20 hectares (49 acres) of park, with a kids' playground. The penthouse is a good value. Herbert Park, off Anglesea Rd., Ballsbridge. ☎ 01/667-2200. www.herbertparkhotel.ie. 153 units. Double €125–€250. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Isaacs Hostel

This friendly guesthouse takes the backpacker concept of humble frugality and turns it right on its head. Calling itself “Dublin’s first V.I.P. hostel,” it has the usual mix of bunk beds, lockers, and TV rooms. But it also has a heady cocktail of extras, including polished wood floors, a full restaurant, and an attractive sauna. It’s a thoughtful hybrid hostel with a friendly and relaxing atmosphere. 2–5 Frenchman’s Lane. ☎ 01/855-6215. www.isaacs.ie. 54 units. €14–€24 per person in dormitory; double €40. MC, V.

Jury’s Inn Christchurch

These straightforward simple rooms just across from Christ Church Cathedral are so ideal for sightseeing if not for a quiet night (request upper floors at the back for peace, front for views). The rooms are decently furnished in slightly dated decor but neat nonetheless, and there are some family rooms. Bathrooms are on the small side. Christchurch Place. ☎ 01/454-0000. www.jurysdoyle.com. 182 units. Double €100–€160. AE, DC, MC, V.

Kingfisher Guesthouse & Apartments

This is a decent budget option, with simple rooms just a few minutes from O’Connell Street. Most have a tiny kitchenette, including microwave and fridge. The apartments, in three different locations, are a better bargain, with living room and kitchen for roughly the same price. It’s a good value but don’t expect luxury. Guesthouse: 166 Parnell St. ☎ 01/872-8732. www.kingfisherdublin.com. 32 units (including guesthouse and apartments). Double €90–€110; apt €55 per person. AE, MC, V.

★★★ Merrion Hotel

This hotel offers gorgeous Georgian luxury, created from elegant town houses—including the Duke of Wellington’s birthplace. The impressive contemporary art on the walls is part of one of the country’s largest private collections. Service is discreetly omnipresent, and the spacious rooms have the finest linen, antiques, and high sash windows. If your budget won’t cover a room here, take afternoon tea in the drawing room in front of the open fire. You could get used to this. Upper Merrion St. ☎ 01/603-0600. www.merrionhotel.com. 143 units. Double €285–€495. AE, DC, MC, V.

Mespil Hotel

In a lovely, quiet location on Grand Canal, the standard rooms in this huge hotel are bright and simple, with plain colors and crisp cotton. Many rooms have a double and single bed. It’s good for families, or partygoers happy with a short walk home. Mespil Rd. ☎ 01/488-4600. www.mespilhotel.com. 255 units. Double €105–€205. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ Morrison Hotel

This is really an oversize boutique hotel, with an ideal location just across the Liffey from Temple Bar. Fashion fans will surely have no trouble pegging the design as the work of designer John Rocha, who uses a palette of neutral colors—cream, chocolate, and black—to achieve a kind of warm minimalism in the guest rooms, which have stereos, Egyptian-cotton linens, and cool Portuguese limestone in the bathrooms. Ormond Quay. ☎ 01/887-2400. www.morrisonhotel.ie. 138 units. Double €195–€450. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Number 31

There are lovely touches in this discreet guesthouse, hidden behind a locked gate down a quiet side street. The spacious rooms have handmade beds; a peat-burning fireplace suffuses the lobby with an incredible smell; and breakfasts are outstanding. But it has to be said, prices are rather steep, given that there’s no bar, no restaurant, no room service, and no air-conditioning. 31 Leeson Close, Lower Leeson St. ☎ 01/676-5011. www.number31.ie. 21 units. Double €150–€320. AE, MC, V.

★ Park Inn

This is part of the old Jameson’s distillery in spruced-up Smithfield. Quirky touches such as glass-walled bathrooms and transparent sinks may be style over substance, but rooms in general are fresh and contemporary, and you can’t miss the huge mural of Chief O’Neill. It’s worth paying a little extra for a funky suite with huge decked balcony. Smithfield Village. ☎ 01/817-3838. www.dublin.parkinn.ie. 73 units. Double €100–€230. AE, MC, V.

➤ *The Irish constitution was drafted in this very room at the Shelbourne.*





> *Clean lines and a spit shine at the Fitzwilliam Hotel.*

★ Premier Suites Stephen's Hall

This all-suite hotel offers a bit of value for families, visitors who plan an extended stay, or folks who want to entertain or do their own cooking. The building recently underwent a full renovation, which renewed each suite in tasteful modern style. Each apartment contains a sitting room, dining area, fully equipped kitchenette, tiled bathroom, and bedroom. How suite it is. 14-17 Lower Leeson St. ☎ 01/638-1111. www.stephens-hall.com. 30 units. 1-bedroom suite €140–€180. AE, DC, MC, V.

Schoolhouse Hotel

Set in a school built in 1859, this hotel looks like a Gothic church from the outside, with turrets and stone archways. Inside, the simple bright rooms are decked out in flowery fabrics and walls. Each room is named after a different Irish writer. A good 15-minute walk from town, its location on Grand Canal suits those seeking a quiet break. 2-8 Northumberland Rd. ☎ 01/667-5014. www.schoolhousehotel.com. 31 units. Double €179–€199. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★★ The Shelbourne

The Irish constitution was drafted here in 1922—in room no. 112—and this historic old hotel still attracts politicians and dignitaries. It claims to have “Ireland’s most luxurious beds,” with 300-thread-count Egyptian cotton linens and feather mattresses. Rooms also have international power sockets so your curling iron shouldn’t explode. The **Lord Mayor’s Lounge** is ideal for afternoon tea. If you have an Irish name and you’re staying here, ask the in-house genealogy butler to explore your family history. 27 St. Stephen’s Green. ☎ 01/663-4500. www.marriott.co.uk. 190 units. Double €285–€475. AE, DC, MC, V.

Temple Bar Hotel

This trendy hotel was once a bank, and great care was taken to preserve the brick facade and Victorian mansard roof. Guest rooms are not so fancy and are quite plain, if comfortable. The orthopedic beds are firm, although the smallish rooms are a bit cramped. **Buskers**, the hotel nightclub, is very popular and loud. Bear that in

mind before you book. Fleet St., Temple Bar.
 ☎ 01/677-3333. www.towerhotelgroup.ie. 129 units. Double €145–€200 double. AE, MC, V.

★ Trinity College

Thankfully you don't need to be scholarly to sleep here. Over the summer, great vacation deals are available in the historic student accommodation blocks. Tending to be single and twin rooms rather than doubles, most units have two rooms sharing a private bathroom, lounge, and kitchen. Breakfast vouchers are issued for the campus canteen. Trinity College Accommodation Office, College Green. ☎ 01/896-1177. www.tcd.ie. 700 units. From €58 per person. MC, V. Available mid-June to late Sept.

★ Trinity Lodge

This enormous gray stone town house dates to 1785, and its 10 large guest rooms are brightly decorated in keeping with that period. There's a second building across the street where six large rooms have a more contemporary edge. These buildings are protected historical structures, so there's no elevator access to their four levels; ask for a ground-floor room if you have mobility problems. 12 S. Frederick St. ☎ 01/679-5044. www.trinitylodge.com. 16 units. Double €180–€235. MC, V.

★ Waterloo House

This guesthouse is charming in an old-world kind of way, with classical music wafting through the elegant, high-ceilinged drawing room where you can linger over the morning papers. Guest rooms are large, but it's hard to decide whether the patterned carpet and box-pleated bedspreads are reassuringly traditional or just dated. The varied breakfast menu offers more than the usual fried eggs. 8-10 Waterloo Rd., Ballsbridge. ☎ 01/660-1888. www.waterloohouse.ie. 17 units. Double €80–€200. MC, V.

★★ The Westbury

Grafton Street's only hotel is a long-standing favorite with upscale shoppers. Newly modernized rooms include wall-mounted plasma screen, pale silks, and handmade Irish furniture, and the lounge has had a boutique-style makeover. Afternoon tea in the lounge accompanied by a pianist is still an institution. Grafton St. ☎ 01/679-1122. www.jurysdoyle.com. 205 units. Double €315–€500. AE, DC, MC, V.



➤ A cherry red door welcomes guests to the Abbott Lodge.

★★ Westin

Another Dublin hotel that used to be a bank, this place is luxurious and elegant. The lobby is lined with big marble columns and decorated with exquisite plasterwork; one entrance leads down a great hall of mirrors. The spacious rooms have a real sense of modern sophistication, and many have sweeping views of the city. College Green. ☎ 01/645-1000. www.westin.com/dublin. 163 units. Double €260–€485. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Wynn's Hotel

Near O'Connell Street, Wynn's has been around since 1845. Check out the plaque in the first-floor bar marking a meeting held by Pádraig Pearse in November 1913. Rooms have a fresh look since refurbishment, with lovely dark wood furniture, writing desks, and plasma TVs. Ask for a quieter room at the back or upper floors. The family rooms are a good size and a decent value. 35-39 Lower Abbey St. ☎ 01/874-5131. www.wynnsotel.ie. 65 units. Double €130–€175. AE, DC, MC, V.



Dublin Nightlife Best Bets

Best Literary Connections

Davy Byrnes, 21 Duke St. (p 71)

Best Cocktails

Mint Bar, Westin Hotel, Westmoreland St. (p 112)

Best Wine Bar

Wine Cellar, 11–17 Exchequer St. (p 113)

Best for Bright Young Things

Ocean, Millennium Tower, Charlotte Quay Dock (p 113)

Best Cozy Suburban Local

Gravediggers, 1 Prospect Sq., Glasnevin (p 111)

Most Decadent, One-of-a-Kind Place

Lillie's Bordello, Grafton St. (p 115)

Best No-Nonsense Pint of Guinness

Mulligan's, Poolbeg St. (p 113)

Best for Celebrity Spotting

Octagon, Clarence Hotel, 6–8 Wellington Quay (p 113)

Best for Rock Fans

Bruxelles, 7–8 Herry St. (p 114)

Best Microbrewery Ales

The Porterhouse, 16–18 Parliament St. (p 81)

Most Authentic Victorian Pub

Ryan's, 28 Parkgate St. (p 113)

Most Campy Thing to Do on a Sunday Night

The George, 87 S. Great Georges St. (p 115)

Best Traditional Music Sessions

Cobblestone, 77 N. King St. (p 114)

Best Oasis of Calm

The Library Bar, Central Hotel, Exchequer St. (p 112)

Best for Following in Brendan Behan's Footsteps

McDaid's, 3 Harry St. (p 62)

Best Place That Sums Up Modern-Day Dublin

Market Bar, Fade St. (p 112)

> You'll find traditional music but no "paddy-whackery" at Cobblestone.



Dublin Nightlife A to Z

Bars & Pubs

★ Bank on College Green

You'll be hard pressed to tear your eyes away from the stunning atrium in this ex-Victorian bank, where the mosaic floor, carved stonework, and cornicing have all been restored. It's on the sightseeing route, so pop in for a pint and some above-average bar food. 20-22 College Green. ☎ 01/677-0677. www.bankoncollegegreen.com.

★★ Davy Byrnes

In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom stops here for a Gorgonzola sandwich and a glass of burgundy. It has drawn poets, writers, and readers ever since. 21 Duke St. (off Grafton St.), Dublin 2. ☎ 01/677-5217. www.davybyrnes.com. See p 71.

★★★ Doheny and Nesbitt

Competition is stiff, but this may well be the best-looking traditional pub in town. The Victorian bar houses two fine old "snugs"—small rooms behind the main bar where women could have a drink out of sight of the men in the olden days. The restaurant is good for traditional Irish food. 5 Lower Baggot St. ☎ 01/676-2945. See p 62.

★★ The Globe

With wooden floorboards and large wood tables, this spacious bar is laid-back and filled with young locals enjoying pints, coffees, free Wi-Fi, tapas, newspapers, and Sunday-afternoon live jazz. A DJ plays most evenings, and it merges with club Ri-Ra (p 115). 11 S. Great Georges St. ☎ 01/671-1220. www.globe.ie.

★★★ Gravediggers

Officially named Kavanagh's, after the family running it since 1833, this bar is adjacent to Glasnevin Cemetery (hence the nickname). Take the left-hand door for the original section, which has dark wood snugs and original flooring and is as far removed from a refurb as you're likely to see. It's still charming, with Guinness-quaffing locals, a friendly owner, and wonderful bar food. 1 Prospect Sq., Glasnevin. ☎ 01/830-7978.

★★★ Grogan's Castle Lounge

This eclectic place is a bit run-down around the edges, but it's a proper local pub, not heavily frequented by tourists. The crowd includes local writers and artists, as well as people who

> Bird's eye view from the atrium at Bank on College Green.



The Best Dublin Nightlife

live just around the corner and can't get enough of its shabby-chic charms. 15 S. William St. ☎ 01/677-9320. See p 63.

★★ Kehoe's

The dark wood interior has seen pints pulled for more than 2 centuries. The front still has the mahogany drawers from its grocery-store heritage, and upstairs is like your old auntie's living room. On summer evenings, students and professionals spill onto the pavements. 9 S. Anne St. ☎ 01/677-8312.

★★ The Library Bar

Sink into your leather armchair, immersed in hush and surrounded by groaning bookshelves and wooden floorboards. The antithesis to Temple Bar frivolities, this creaky old place is ideal for a relaxing whiskey in front of the roaring log fire on a cold (or even warm) evening. Central Hotel, Exchequer St. ☎ 01/679-7302. www.centralhotel.ie.

★★★ The Long Hall

This is Doheny and Nesbitt's main competition in the Prettiest Pub Contest. With a beautiful Victorian decor of filigree-edged mirrors, polished dark woods, and traditional snugs, this place is like a theater of beer. The atmosphere

is great and bartenders pour a good pint. 51 S. Great Georges St. ☎ 01/475-1590. See p 63.

★★ Market Bar

This former sausage factory inside George's Street Arcade is a buzzing, contemporary place. The vast high-ceilinged warehouse has been carefully redesigned with red-brick walls and skylights; funky art and tall plants add to the style. There's a decent tapas menu, a good wine list, and a heated courtyard. Fade St. ☎ 01/613-9094. www.marketbar.ie.

★★ McDaid's

This was Brendan Behan's favorite hangout—well, one of them at least; he had so many back in his Dublin drinking days. This place still has a literary bent. It's well on the tourist track these days, and thus has lost some of its cool cache. Still, it retains a good atmosphere. 3 Harry St. ☎ 01/679-4395. See p 62.

★★ Mint Bar

A sophisticated cocktail bar in the basement of the Westin Hotel, this is suitable for a quiet, intimate drink, probably at the end of a long night—one for the road with style. The cocktail menu is imaginative but pricey. Westin Hotel, Westmoreland St. ☎ 01/645-1000. www.westin.com/dublin.



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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Anseo 29 | The Library Bar 16 |
| Bank on College Green 18 | Lillie's Bordello 23 |
| Brazen Head 4 | The Long Hall 13 |
| Bruxelles 19 | Market Bar 14 |
| Cobblestone 1 | McDaid's 26 |
| Davy Byrnes 24 | Mint Bar 21 |
| Dice Bar 2 | Mulligan's 20 |
| Doheny & Nesbitt 30 | Ocean 32 |
| The Dragon 12 | Octagon 7 |
| Gaiety Theatre Late | O'Neill's 22 |
| Night Club 28 | Porterhouse |
| The George 9 | Central 8 |
| The Globe 10 | Pravda 6 |
| Gravediggers 5 | Ri-Ra 11 |
| Grogans 15 | Ryan's 3 |
| Howl at the Moon 31 | Spy Club 27 |
| Kehoe's 25 | Wine Cellar 17 |

★★ Mulligan's

The Guinness here is probably the best in town, and has been since the 1850s—though Joyce, who was a regular, has his characters in *Dubliners* drinking hot whiskeys here. It's for those who appreciate a smooth pint, ornate dusty mirrors, and mahogany snugs. Poolbeg St. ☎ 01/677-5582. www.mulligans.ie.

★★ Ocean

Tucked away on Grand Canal Quay, this spot is frequented by hip youngsters who populate the renovated dockland area. Join them on a summer's evening on a comfy sofa by the window or out on the waterfront terrace. 1st floor, Millennium Tower, Charlotte Quay Dock. ☎ 01/668-8862.

★ Octagon

Many come here because of who the landlord is—and, yes, Bono has occasionally been seen. The eight-sided snug interior with great skylight is relatively quiet even when it's filled with wannabe celebs and rich business folk. The emphasis is on cocktails; it's probably not the place to order a pint. Clarence Hotel, 6-8 Wellington Quay. ☎ 01/407-0800.

★★ O'Neill's

This friendly place is the pub equivalent of quicksand—you walk in for a quick pint, and before you know it, it's midnight and you've got 20 new best friends. It's big and noisy, but it's made up of a series of smaller rooms, and that makes it a pleasant place for conversation. It gets a bit boisterous on the weekends, though. 2 Suffolk St., Dublin 2. ☎ 01/679-3656. www.oneillsbar.com. See p 64.

★★ Ryan's

The Victorian interior has seen many global heads of state supping pints, and we agree they made a good choice. The gorgeous mahogany fittings and old lamps have retained the handsome elegance of the one-time gentleman's retreat. 28 Parkgate St. ☎ 01/677-6097. www.fxbrestaurants.com.

★★★ Wine Cellar

In the stone-walled basement of the fabulous Fallon & Byrne food emporium, some 350 bottles of wine from 12 countries are on offer with decent food to soak it up (oysters are a specialty). Comfortable, decadent, cozy, yet reasonably priced, it's a real find. 11-17 Exchequer St. ☎ 01/472-1010. www.fallonandbyrne.com.



> Pubs like Cobblestone provide a meeting place for local musicians looking to jam.

Live Music Bars & Pubs

★★ Brazen Head

Revolutions were plotted in this brass-filled, lantern-lit pub in its day. The Head was first licensed in 1661, which makes it one of the oldest pubs in Ireland. Nestled on the south bank of the River Liffey, it is at the end of a cobblestone courtyard and was once the meeting place of rebels Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone. A full a la carte menu is offered and traditional music sessions start at 9:30pm nightly. 20 Lower Bridge St. ☎ 01/679-5186.

★★ Bruxelles

A rock venue for night owls and bikers, with live jazz every Sunday afternoon and bands 5 nights a week, including rock, indie, and blues. Open late every night, its huge patio gets packed on summer evenings. 7-8 Herry St. ☎ 01/677-5362.

★★★ Cobblestone

This is the most Irish of Irish pubs. Traditional Irish music is free in the musicians' corner downstairs. You have to buy tickets for the proper music hall upstairs, but the bands are top-notch. It's one of the places where the locals go to hear music, so expect to find none of what they call "paddy-whackery." 77 N. King St., Smithfield. ☎ 01/872-1799. Live music Mon-Wed 9pm; Thurs-Sat 7pm; Sun 2pm. Luas: Smithfield.

★★ Porterhouse Central

This three-floored bar is the flagship of the Porterhouse microbrewery chain. Live bands play nightly on a tiny stage—best seen from the top-floor balcony—with bluesy rock on Mondays, local bands midweek, and packed traditional music sessions on weekends. Don't ask for Guinness; ask the bar staff what they recommend according to your taste. Their judgment is astonishing. 16-18 Parliament St. ☎ 01/679-8847. www.porterhousebrewco.com. See p 64.

DJ Bars

★★ Anseo

Pronounced An-shaw, this slightly left-field, casually hip, and fun place has DJs playing on the weekends. Although there's no designated dance space, those in the mood will get up and boogie wherever they fancy. 8 Camden St. Lower. ☎ 01/475-1321.

★★ Dice Bar

This black-walled, red-lit bar with bizarre flying spaceman outside the toilet looks like a Goth hangout, but it's a popular DJ bar with a great mixture of music and hip regulars, with no cover charge. With rockabilly on Sundays, blues on Wednesdays, and even a monthly Frank Zappa night, the dance floor can get crowded. It's off the beaten track but worth the detour. 79 Queen St. ☎ 01/872-8622.

★ Pravda

With its bizarre Russian-themed murals and knickknacks and a world of vodkas, Pravda's live music nights get the 20-something punters in, and weekends have good DJs playing indie. It's renowned for its civilized monthly Latin night and for its weekly anything-goes King Kong Club open-mic night. Lower Liffey St. ☎ 01/874-0090. www.pravda.ie.

Spy Club

Fashionable 30-somethings love this lounge bar, where the emphasis is on socializing rather than dancing. The look begins with a classical, 18th-century town house with soaring corniced ceilings. Next, add Greco-Roman friezes and pared-down, contemporary furnishings. Need more drama? The VIP room's focal point is a photo of a woman in the buff riding a tiger pelt—an in-your-face wink at the Celtic tiger. Saturday is electric pop night; Sunday is gay night. Powerscourt Townhouse Centre, William St. S. ☎ 01/677-0014. www.spydublin.com.

Clubs

★ Gaiety Theatre Late Night Club

When the thespians leave, the partygoers arrive. From midnight, Dublin's oldest theater turns into a megaclub with four bars hosting live bands and DJs, usually spinning R & B, Latin, and hip-hop, plus live blues. Don't forget to check out the ornate decor before you get too drunk. S. King St. ☎ 01/677-1717.

★ Howl at the Moon

This huge, multilevel bar/club draws in a fun young crowd. DJs play popular dance tracks but nothing too techno. There's no cover, which lends an air of inclusiveness to the place. There's a small outdoor terrace and areas with varied decor, and some bar stools. There's a door staff but no official dress code. Lower Mount St. ☎ 01/634-5460. www.capitalbars.com. Wed–Sat until late.

★★ Lillie's Bordello

With its red walls and ironic erotica, this used to be the celeb hangout of choice in Dublin. Its impact has worn off somewhat, but that's good news for those who don't want to talk their way past doormen; anyone turned out well will probably get in. It still draws its fair share of poseurs and wannabe celebs, but it's a good spot for a cocktail if you go in looking like you're up for it. Adam Court, Grafton St. ☎ 01/679-9204.



> The Octagon bar at the Clarence is a chic hub in Temple Bar.

www.lilliesbordello.ie. Sun–Tues no cover; Wed €5; Thurs €10; Fri and Sat €15.

★★ Ri-Ra

In the basement of the Globe, DJs play a range of R & B, rock, funk, and punk on different nights 7 days a week. Monday's "Strictly Handbag" night is given over to '80s and '90s sounds. The crowd is chilled out, the dark corners are cozy, and the attitude is generally carefree. 11 S. Great George's St. ☎ 01/671-1220. www.rira.ie. €7–€10 cover.

Gay Bars & Clubs

★ The Dragon

Featuring a row of camp snugs on one side, elaborate glam lighting, a mezzanine overlooking the dance floor, and a huge Chinese dragon in the window, this is Dublin's only dedicated gay club. DJs play techno, hard house, and pop most nights. The friendly, impeccably dressed crowd love the cocktails—try the Cookie Monster. S. Georges St. ☎ 01/478-1590. www.capitalbars.com.

★★ The George

The Dragon's big sister, this long-standing favorite is split in two: Pint-drinking men of all ages frequent the traditional old bar, and the adjacent dance bar/club draws a young trendy crowd, with weekend DJs. There's also comedy on Wednesday, and—lovers of kitsch take note—bingo on Sunday. 87 S. Great Georges St. ☎ 01/478-2983. www.capitalbars.com.

Glendalough & Wicklow Day Trip

County Wicklow's northernmost border is just a dozen miles or so south of Dublin, making it one of the easier day trips from the capital. If you detour off the big, bland motorways and brave those Irish roads, you'll find treasure amid the hills and peaceful monastic sites around the Wicklow Mountains—including Glendalough, the isolated 5th-century monastery site founded by St. Kevin in a natural setting that euros couldn't buy today. You can follow this tour as a circuit in 2 days or visit each site separately from the capital.

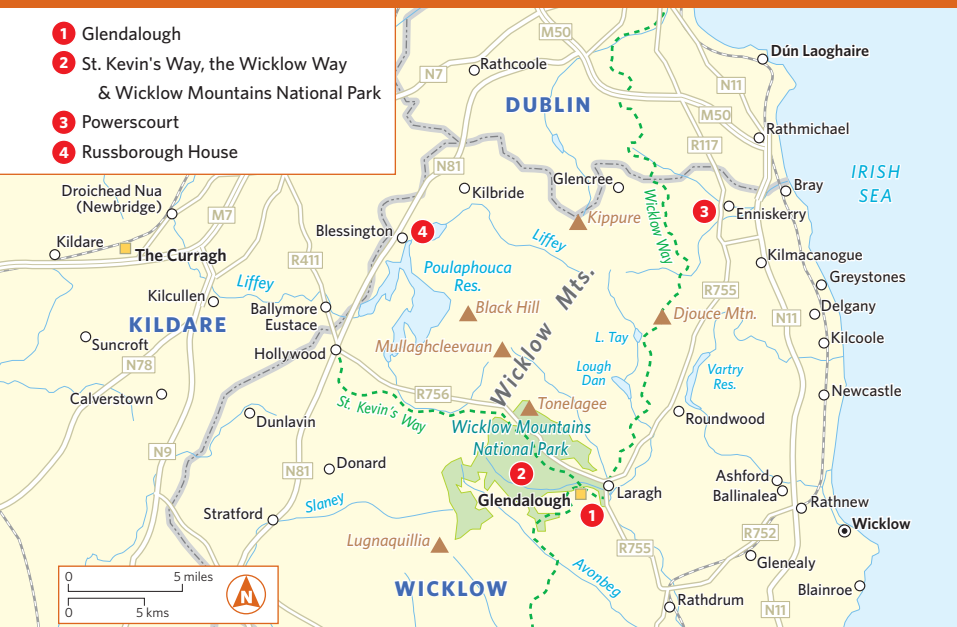


> *St. Kevin's Church, also known as St. Kevin's Kitchen, is a popular stop for hikers.*

START From Dublin, head south on the R115 and follow signs to Glendalough. **TRIP LENGTH** 47km (29 miles).

1 ★★★ Glendalough. This abandoned monastery built around two dark lakes surrounded by forests seems to remain in perpetual soft focus, shrouded by mist, as you wander the rocky paths beside the ancient chapels here. Its Irish name is Gleann Da Locha, meaning the Glen of the Two Lakes. In the 5th century, a monk named St. Kevin chose this secluded setting around a Bronze Age tomb for his home. For 7 years he fasted, prayed,

slept on the hard ground, and ate only what he could catch or find. His self-deprivation and fervor gained attention from passing hunters and peddlers, and soon similarly devout followers found their way here. The grounds encompass many walking trails, and each one takes in different ruins, as the chapels and houses were scattered over miles around the glen. Although the monastic community is in ruins, there's a round tower, 31m (102 ft.) high and 16m (52 ft.) around the base, hundreds of timeworn Celtic crosses, and several chapels. In the high season, it's best to ar-



> Alas, three major robberies have damaged and diminished the small but still precious art collection at Russborough House.

rive very early in the morning to beat the crowds, or after 5pm (it stays light until 9pm at least) in order to see it at its best. (The visitor center closes at 5 or 6pm, but the grounds remain open.)
 ⌚ 1 hr. Visitor center ☎ 0404/45325. Tickets €2.80 adults, €2.10 seniors, €1.30 students and kids 11 & under. Mid-Oct to mid-Mar daily 9:30am-5pm; mid-Mar to mid-Oct daily 9am-6pm. On the T7, 11km (6½ miles) east of Wicklow, Co. Wicklow.

The entrance to St. Kevin's Way is on the grounds of Glendalough.

2 * St. Kevin's Way, the Wicklow Way & Wicklow Mountains National Park (Glendalough).** Loved by hikers and ramblers for its isolation and sheer beauty, this stunning National Park stretches for nearly 20,000 hectares (49,400 acres) across County Wicklow. There

are several trails and walking paths, many of which converge on the Glendalough Valley. The **St. Kevin's Way Walk** is a 1,000-year-old walking path, only recently restored, which runs for 30km (19 miles) through scenic countryside between Glendalough and Hollywood. The **Wicklow Way** is a signposted, 132km (82-mile) walking path that runs from the southern suburbs of Dublin, all the way to the Wicklow Mountains, and on to Clonegal. (The official start to the Wicklow Way is in the car park of Marlay House, Marlay Park, south Dublin. Distance to Glendalough is 40km/25 miles.) You can pick up information and maps at the Wicklow National Park center at Glendalough or at any local tourist office. Information on less strenuous walks can be found in the Wicklow Trail Sheets, also from tourist offices. It provides a map and route description for several good short walks along the path. One lovely walk on the Way begins at the Deerpark parking lot near the Dargle River and continues to Luggala, passing Djouce Mountain. You'll find an information station at the Upper Lake at Glendalough. ☉ 30 min.–2 hr., depending on how much you walk. Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. ☎ 0404/45425. Information office free admission. Monastic City Visitor Centre tickets €2.90 adults, €2.10 seniors, €1.30 students and kids, €7.50 families. June–Aug daily 10am–6pm; May and Sept weekends only 10am–5:30pm.

From Glendalough, take the R755 northeast. Then turn left onto the R760 and follow signs to Powerscourt. 28km (18 miles). From Dublin, take the M50 southeast, which becomes the N11, and follow signs to Powerscourt. 36km (22 miles).

☕ **Terrace Café.** On the **Powerscourt** estate, this useful cafe is run by the Avoca chain. It serves rich cakes, hot soups and stews, and healthy salads against the backdrop of breathtaking views. Powerscourt, Enniskerry. ☎ 01/201-6070. \$.

③ **★★★ Powerscourt (Enniskerry).** The 20th century was not kind to this magnificent estate; it was abandoned and then gutted by fire, and it has taken 30 years to restore the Palladian house to its former glory. The gardens are magnificent, with classical statuary everywhere, a shady grotto made of petrified moss, a Japanese garden, and an over-the-top fountain from which statues of winged horses rise. The landscaper Daniel Robertson designed the gardens between 1745 and 1767. Legend has it that due to terrible gout, he oversaw the work while being carted around in a wheelbarrow, sipping port as he went. When the bottle went dry, work was done for the day. There's a garden center where you can learn everything there is to know about the plants that thrive



here and pick up seeds to take home (if your home country's customs laws permit it). A few rooms of the house are now open to the public, including an exhibition that tells the history of the house and its restoration. There's also a playground for the kids and plenty of gift shops. If you feel energetic, follow the well-marked path over 7km (4½ miles) to the picturesque

Powerscourt Waterfall—the highest in Ireland at 121m (397 ft.). If you're not feeling energetic, you can drive, following signs from the estate.

⌚ 2 hr. Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow. ☎ 01/204-6000.

www.powerscourt.ie. Free admission to house.

Gardens €8 adults, €7 seniors and students, €5 kids 15 & under. Waterfall €5 adults, €4.50 seniors and students, €3.50 kids 15 & under.

Daily 9:30am–5:30pm; ballroom open Sun only 9:30am–1:30pm (also Mon during summer); waterfall Nov–Feb 10:30am–4pm; Mar–Apr and Sept–Oct 10:30am–5:30pm; and May–Aug 9:30am–7pm, daily.

From Powerscourt, take the country roads heading west. Then turn left onto R115. At Kippure, turn right onto R759. At Athdown, turn left onto the country road through Scurlocksleap, Oldcourt, and Butterhill to Blessington and follow signs to Russborough House. 34km (21 miles). From Dublin, take the N81 southwest and follow signs. 29km (18 miles).

4 ★★ Russborough House (Blessington).

This impressive villa was built between 1741 and 1751, designed by the great Richard Castle, who also designed Powerscourt House (see p 118). In the 1950s, the house was bought by Sir Alfred Beit, a member of the De Beers diamond family. He had inherited a massive collection of art and wanted someplace to keep it, and thought this rural mansion was just the spot. Thus began one of the most exquisite small rural art collections you're likely to find, including paintings by Vermeer, Goya, Gainsborough, and Rubens, although most of the paintings have been moved out recently to area museums after a series of robberies. You can see the house only by guided tour, and there is certainly a lot to see—ornate plaster ceilings by the Lafranchini brothers, huge marble mantelpieces, inlaid floors, and lavish use of mahogany in doors and staircase, as well as fine displays of silver, porcelain, and fine furniture.

⌚ 1½ hr. Blessington, Co. Wicklow (off N81).

☎ 045/865239. www.russborough.ie. Tickets €6 adults, €4.50 seniors and students, €3 kids 11 & under. Mid-Apr to Sept daily 10am–5pm; Mar and Oct Sun and bank holidays only 10am–5pm. Tours given on the hour.

> *Richard Castle designed both Powerscourt and Russborough House (below).*



Kilkenny Day Trip

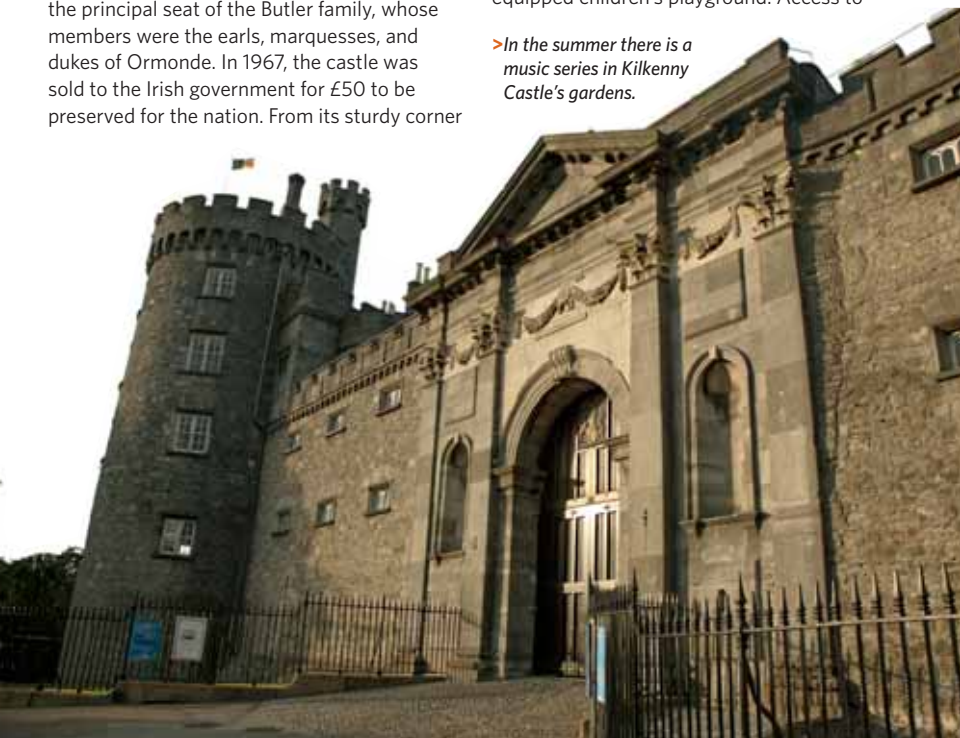
With its remarkable collection of well-preserved castles, churches, and winding narrow lanes, Kilkenny City is a graceful medieval town. It's also a national hub for crafts and design, and its streets are dotted with shops selling pottery, woodwork, paintings, and jewelry. Its many charms make it a little too popular during high season—plenty of day trippers visit from the capital, though Kilkenny is actually closer to Waterford and Wexford. It's nonetheless worth the trip from either base. You could easily spend the whole day wandering around Kilkenny City, but we urge you to explore the lovely villages and stunning monastic treasures in the surrounding countryside as well.

START Kilkenny is on the N77, 132km (82 miles) southwest of Dublin. From Dublin, take the N7 and M7 southwest. At junction 17, take the N8 south. At Durrow, continue south on the N77 to Kilkenny. **TRIP LENGTH 28.5 miles (46 km).**

1 ★★★ kids Kilkenny Castle. Standing majestically beside the River Nore, this landmark medieval castle—built in the 12th century and remodeled in Victorian times—was the principal seat of the Butler family, whose members were the earls, marquesses, and dukes of Ormonde. In 1967, the castle was sold to the Irish government for £50 to be preserved for the nation. From its sturdy corner

towers to its battlements, Kilkenny Castle retains the imposing lines of an authentic fortress and sets the tone for the city. The exquisitely restored interior includes a fine collection of Butler family portraits, some from as far back as the 14th century. The old castle kitchen operates as a tearoom in the summer. The 20-hectare (49-acre) grounds include a riverside walk, extensive gardens, and a well-equipped children's playground. Access to

>In the summer there is a music series in Kilkenny Castle's gardens.





the main body of the castle is by guided tour only. This is a very busy site, so arrive early (or quite late) to avoid waiting. ⌚ 1 hr. The Parade, Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-1450. Tickets €6.50 adults, €3.70 seniors and students, €2.10 kids 7 & over. Open daily June–Aug 9:30am–7pm; Apr–May 10:30am–5pm; Sept 10am–6:30pm; Oct–Mar 10:30am–12:45pm and 2–5pm.

2 ★ Rothe House. This is a typical middle-class house from the Tudor period. Originally a merchant's home, built in 1594, it consists of three stone buildings divided by cobbled courtyards. It has an arcaded shop front and a remarkable timber ceiling. Inside is a museum of sorts, filled with artifacts and period costumes. A family history research service for Kilkenny city and county also runs offices here. ⌚ 45 min. Parliament St., Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-2893. www.rothehouse.com. Tickets €5 adults; €4 seniors, students and kids 15 & under. Apr–Oct Mon–Sat 10:30am–5pm, Sun 3–5pm; Nov–Mar Mon–Sat 10:30am–4:30pm.

3 ★ Black Abbey. Nobody is sure why this Dominican church, founded in 1225, is named Black Abbey. It may be because the Dominicans wore black capes over their white habits, or perhaps because the Black Plague claimed the lives of eight priests in 1348. The



> *Rothe House, home to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society, houses a collection of artifacts and period costumes.*

Black Abbey's darkest days came in 1650, when Oliver Cromwell used it as a courthouse before destroying it. By the time he left, all that remained were the walls. The abbey was rebuilt, and opened in 1816 as a church; a new nave was completed in 1866; and the entire building was fully restored in 1979. Among the elements remaining from the original abbey are an alabaster sculpture of the Holy Trinity that dates from 1400 and a pre-Reformation statue of St. Dominic carved in Irish oak, which is believed to be the oldest such piece in the world. ⌚ 30 min. Abbey St. (off Parliament St.), Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-1279. Free admission; donations welcome. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 7:30am–7pm, Sun 9am–7pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 7:30am–5:30pm. No visits during worship.

4 ★ **St. Canice Cathedral.** At the northern end of the city, this is the church that gave Kilkenny its name. The current structure was built in the 13th century on the site of a 6th-century church. Restored in the 17th century after being defaced by Cromwell's gang, the Cathedral is noteworthy for its rich, timbered interior and colorful glasswork. In the churchyard is a massive round tower, 30m high (98 ft.) and 14m (46 ft.) in circumference. It's believed to be a relic of the ancient church (although its original conical top has been replaced by a slightly domed roof). If you want to climb the tower, it will cost you 1.30 euros and more calories than you can count. Be warned—it's a

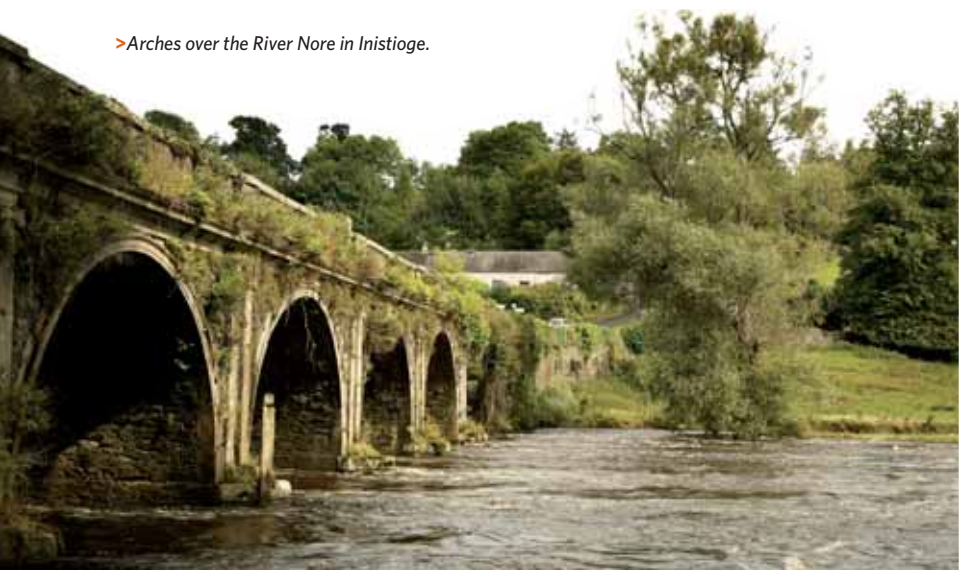
steep and very narrow climb that is not for the faint of heart or the unfit. ⌚ 45 min. Coach Rd., Irishtown, Kilkenny. ☎ 056/776-4971. Tickets to cathedral only €4 adults; €3 seniors, kids, and students. Tickets to cathedral and round tower €6. Combination ticket with Rothe House (excludes cathedral round tower) €7 adults; €5 seniors, kids, and students. Apr–May and Sept Mon–Sat 10am–1pm and 2–5pm, Sun 2–6pm; June–Aug Mon–Sat 9am–6pm, Sun 2–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–1pm and 2–4pm, Sun 2–4pm.

5 🍷 **Kyteler's Inn.** This handsome inn has been in business for over 650 years. It was once the home of Dame Alice Kyteler, a colorful local character who escaped being burned at the stake for being a witch and was never heard of again. Decent sandwiches, panini, and bar food are served until 3pm. Kieran's St., Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-1064. www.kytelersinn.com. \$.

From Kilkenny town center head south and turn left onto the N76/ N10 Kilkenny ring road. Turn right onto the R700, heading southeast through Bennettsbridge and Thomastown to Inistioge. 26.7km (16.6 miles).

6 ★★ **Inistioge.** About 24km (15 miles) south-east of Kilkenny City is this gorgeous little town, nestling at the end of a nine-arched stone bridge over the River Nore. Pronounced “In-is-teeg,” it was an important monastic site in early Christian times, although not much remains of its monas-

➤ *Arches over the River Nore in Inistioge.*





> *Rothe House, with its amazing vaulted timber ceiling, was restored and opened to the public in 1961.*

tic heritage. Instead, the greatest pleasure is to be had by just wandering its Arcadian streets. St. Mary's, the church on the town square, dates from the 13th century, and the remains of a Norman castle occupy a hill just outside the town. Also nearby are the lovely Woodstock Gardens, once the grounds to a grand 18th-century mansion that burned down in 1920. To find them, keep driving up High Street until you leave town; you should see the entrance after about a mile. ⌚ 1½ hr. Co. Kilkenny. Woodstock Gardens ☎ 087/854-9785. Free admission. Parking €4 per vehicle. On the R700, about 26km (16 miles) southeast of Kilkenny City.

Take the R700 back up to Thomastown. In town, turn right onto the N9 (Low St. then Mill St.) and follow signs to Jerpoint Abbey. 10.5km (6.5 miles).

7 ★★ Jerpoint Abbey. Relatively unknown, despite being just 18km (11 miles) from Kilkenny, this 12th-century Cistercian ruin is a breathtaking, ethereal place. Preserved in a peaceful country setting, one of the abbey's highlights is a sculptured cloister arcade, lined with astonishing medieval carvings. Some depict scenes of monastic life; others have a more grotesque bent. A few have traces of their original pigment. If you're coming off season, and can possibly time it right, try to come near sunset; wandering around the ruins as the air turns golden is an unforgettable experience. Ask politely at the visitor center for details of how to visit the mysterious **Church of the Long Man**, a few miles away. It's a well-kept local secret. ⌚ 45 min. Co. Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-4623. Tickets €2.90 adults, €2.10 seniors, €1.30

kids, €7.40 families. Open daily Mar-May and mid-Sept to mid-Nov 9:30am-5pm; June to mid-Sept 9:30am-6pm; late Nov 10am-4pm. On the N9, 11km (6½ miles) northwest of Inistioge.

Less than 1km (0.6 miles) on the N9 from Jerpoint, turn right on the small country road that runs through Jerpoint Church, Oldtown, and Knocknabooly, up to Stoneyfield. From Stoneyfield town center follow signs to Kells Priory. 8.9km (5.5 miles).

8 ★★★ Kells Priory. With its encompassing fortification walls and towers, as well as complex monastic ruins enfolded into the sloping south bank of the King's River, Kells is a glorious ruin. In 1193 Baron Geoffrey FitzRobert founded the priory and established a Norman-style town beside it. The current ruins date from the 13th to the 15th century. The priory's wall has been carefully restored, and it connects seven towers, the remains of an abbey, and foundations of chapels and houses. You can tell by the thick walls that this monastery was well fortified, and those walls were built for a reason—it was frequently attacked. In the 13th century, it was the subject of two battles and burned to the ground. The priory is less than a half-mile from the village of Kells. If you have some time to spare, there's a footbridge behind it, which takes you across the river and intersects a riverside walk leading to a picturesque old mill. ⌚ 1 hr. Kells, Co. Kilkenny. ☎ 056/772-8255. Tours by appointment. Off N76 or N10. From N76 south of Kilkenny, follow signs for R699/Callan and stay on R699 until you see signs for Kells.

Ancient County Meath Day Trip

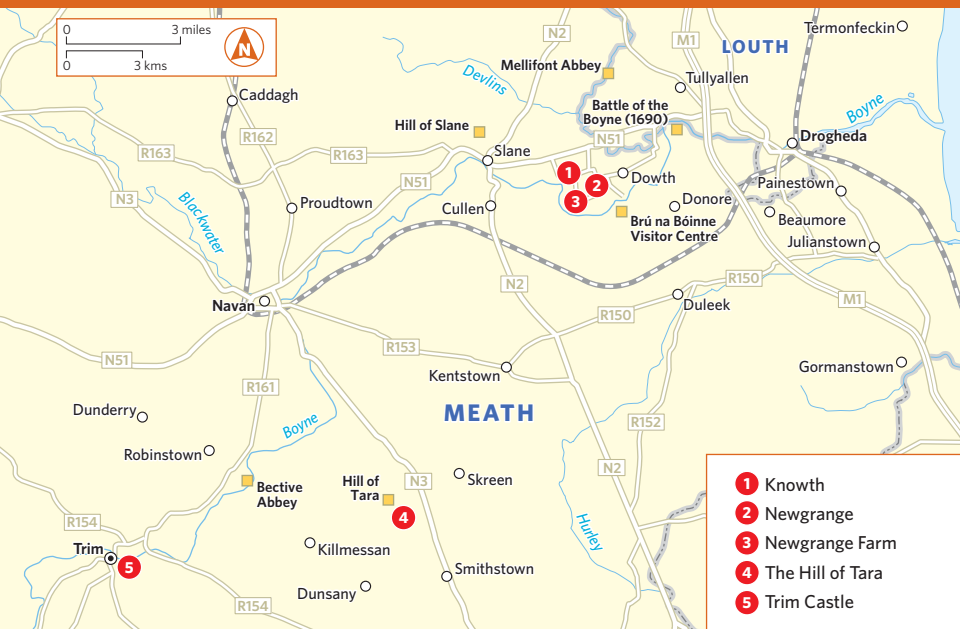
Some of Ireland's most astonishing prehistoric sites are within an easy day trip from Dublin. Newgrange, Ireland's best-known prehistoric burial site, is older than the Egyptian Pyramids or Stonehenge. Lesser known but equally awe-inspiring is Knowth, with its enormous, long underground chambers that are still offering up new mysteries. There's not as much to see at the Hill of Tara, a place of enormous spiritual significance to the ancient Irish, but it's an immensely atmospheric place, steeped in legend and folklore.



> When excavating the Anglo-Norman Trim Castle, archaeologists discovered 10 decapitated bodies, presumably robbers who lost their heads for their crimes.

START From Dublin, go north on the M1. Follow signs for Newgrange, Knowth, and the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre (about 26 miles /42 km). **TRIP LENGTH** 28.5 miles (46 km).

1 * Knowth (Slane).** This extraordinary prehistoric burial site contains the longest passage tombs yet discovered in Ireland. Knowth was closed to the public for many years as archaeologists explored its depths, but at last it is now open, at least in part. It is mainly composed of two massively long underground burial chambers, the longest of which stretches for 40m (131ft.), and was discovered only in 1968. In the mound itself, scientists found the largest collection of passage tomb art uncovered thus far in Europe, as well as a number of underground chambers and 300 carved slabs. The mound is surrounded by 17 satellite graves in a complex pattern. And still, nobody can give a definitive answer to the biggest mystery of all: What was it all for? The meaning of it all remains shadowed in mystery, and even now, all of Knowth's secrets have not been uncovered—excavation work is quite constant here, and you may get a chance to see the archaeologists at work. All tickets for here and Newgrange (see p 125) are issued at the visitor center. There is no direct access to either monument; visitors are taken there by shuttle bus.



⌚ 1 hr. Between Drogheda and Slane, Co. Meath.
 ☎ 041/988-0300. www.knowth.com. Tickets to Knowth and Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre €4.50 adults, €2.90 seniors, €1.60 students and kids 7 & over. Combined tickets with Newgrange available. Nov-Feb daily 9:30am-5pm; Mar-Apr and Oct daily 9:30am-5:30pm; May daily 9am-6:30pm; June to mid-Sept daily 9am-7pm; mid- to late Sept daily 9am-6:30pm.

Newgrange is next to Knowth.

2 ★★ ★ **Newgrange (Slane).** Ireland's best-known prehistoric monument is one of the archaeological wonders of western Europe. Built as a burial mound more than 5,000 years ago—long before the Egyptian Pyramids or Stonehenge—it sits atop a hill near the Boyne, massive and mysterious. The mound is 11m (36 ft.) tall, and approximately 78m (256 ft.) in diameter. It consists of 200,000 tons of stone, a 6-ton capstone, and other stones weighing up to 16 tons each, many of which were hauled from as far away as County Wicklow and the Mountains of Mourne. Each stone fits perfectly in the overall pattern, and the result is a watertight structure, an amazing feat of engineering. The question remains, though:

Who was it for? Even as archaeologists found more elaborate carvings in the stones, they got no clues as to whether it was for kings, for political leaders, or for a long-lost ritual. Inside, a passage 18m (59 ft.) long leads to a central burial chamber that sits in pitch-darkness all year, except for 5 days in December. During the winter solstice (Dec 19-23), a shaft of sunlight travels down the arrow-straight passageway for 17 minutes, until it hits the back wall of the burial chamber. You can register for a lottery to be in the tomb for this extraordinary event, and take your chances to be selected as one of the lucky few for the unique event. As part of the tour, you can walk down the passage, past elaborately carved stones and into the chamber, which has three sections, each with a basin stone that once held cremated human remains. ⌚ 1 hr. Co. Meath. ☎ 041/988-0300. www.knowth.com/newgrange.htm. Guided tour and admission to Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre €5.80 adults, €4.50 seniors, €2.90 students and kids 7 & over, €15 families. Nov-Feb daily 9:30am-5pm; Mar-Apr and Oct daily 9:30am-5:30pm; May and mid- to late Sept daily 9am-6:30pm; June to mid-Sept daily 9am-7pm. Off the N51, near Slane.





> **OPPOSITE PAGE** Newgrange is older than the Egyptian pyramids and Stonehenge. **THIS PAGE** In a feat of ancient engineering, the mound at Newgrange is watertight.

Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre Café.

Dining options are limited on today's tour; these are hardly the places for plentiful snack stops. However, you can get a basic but perfectly good lunch at the tearooms located at the Newgrange visitor center. Stop here or bring a picnic. Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, near Slane. ☎ 041/988-0300. \$.

Newgrange Farm is next to the Newgrange Prehistoric Monument.

3 ★ kids Newgrange Farm (east of Slane).

This is a great pit stop if you're traveling with kids—possibly as an alternative to one of the sites below. As a break from all that history, youngsters will thank you for bringing them to this busy 133-hectare (329-acre) farm, where farmer Bill Redhouse and his family will lead a 1½-hour tour. You can feed the ducks, groom a calf, and bottle-feed the lambs and kid goats. Children can hold a newborn chick, pet a pony, and play with the pigs. In the aviaries are pheasants and rare birds. The high point of the week (for kids, anyway) occurs at roughly 3pm every Sunday when the sheep take to the track

with teddy bear jockeys for the weekly derby. Demonstrations of threshing, horseshoeing, and sheepdogs working are always underway. While in the herb garden, you can get a lesson in picking edible plants and herbs. There's also a coffee shop and plenty of picnic space. ⌚ 1½ hr. Co. Meath. ☎ 041/982-4119. www.newgrangefarm.com. Admission €8 per person. Daily 10am–5pm. Closed Sept to Good Friday. Off N51, 3.2km (2 miles) east of Slane (signposted off N51 and directly west of Newgrange monument).

Rejoin the N51 and turn left. At Navan take the N3 heading southeast and follow signs for the Hill of Tara. 30km (18 miles).

4 ★ The Hill of Tara (Navan). This nondescript green hill has sentimental appeal for visitors from abroad with Irish ancestry. Legends and folklore place it at the center of early Irish history. Ancient tombs have been discovered on the hill that date back to the Stone Age. Pagans believed that the goddess Queen Maeve lived and reigned from here (p 362). By the 3rd century, it was home to the most powerful men in Ireland—the high kings. They had a ceremonial residence on the hill, and ruled as much by myth



>Trim Castle got a boost in tourism when it was selected by Mel Gibson as a location for the film *Braveheart*.

as by military strength. Every 3 years they would hold a *feis* (a kind of giant party-cum-government session), at which more than 1,000 princes, poets, athletes, priests, druids, musicians, and jesters celebrated for a week. A *feis* wasn't all fun and games: Laws were passed, disputes settled, and matters of defense decided. The last *feis* was held in A.D. 560. Thereafter, Tara went into a decline as the power and popularity of Christianity rose. Although there's little left to see except grassy mounds, some ancient pillar stones, and depressions where the Iron Age ring forts stood, it's still a magnificent spot. A visitor center is in the old church beside the entrance to the archaeological area. ⌚ 45 min. Navan, Co. Meath. ☎ 046/902-5903. Tickets €2.10 adults, €1.30 seniors, €1.10 students and kids. Mid-May to mid-Sept daily 10am–6pm. Off the N3.

Take the small country road southwest through Odder, Kilmessan, and Marshalstown. Then turn right onto the R154 and follow signs for Trim Castle. 16km (9½ miles).

5 ★ **Trim Castle (Trim).** This massive Anglo-Norman edifice is a magnificent sight. The

Norman lord Hugh de Lacy occupied the site in 1172 and built the enclosed cruciform keep. In the 13th century, his son Walter enlarged the keep, circled it with a many-towered curtain wall, and added a great hall as an upgraded venue for courts, parliaments, and feasts. It was abandoned in the 17th century, and few paid much attention to it until Mel Gibson chose it as a location for the film *Braveheart*. Since then, it's been generally overrun with curious visitors in the summertime. The Irish Heritage Service restored it as a “preserved ruin,” respecting much of its historic integrity. It's a skeletal reminder of the once-great Anglo-Norman clout. Note that the tour is unsuitable for small or unruly children, and for anyone unable to climb steep slopes or afraid of formidable heights. ⌚ 30 min. Trim, Co. Meath. ☎ 046/943-8619. Ticket to grounds and tour of keep €3.70 adults, €1.60 seniors, €2.30 students and kids; ticket to grounds only €1.60 adults, €1.10 seniors, €1 kids and students. Easter–Oct daily 10am–6pm; Nov–Easter weekends only 10am–5pm. Tours every 30 min. First tour at 10:15am; last admission 1 hr. before closing.

Dublin Fast Facts

Arriving

BY PLANE Dublin is Ireland's main hub. **Aer Lingus** (☎ 800/474-7424 in the U.S., or 0818/365000 in Ireland; www.aerlingus.ie) runs nonstop flights to Dublin from New York (JFK), Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Baltimore. Most major U.S. and Canadian carriers fly direct to Dublin. Most major European carriers fly from the U.S. and Canada to Dublin with one stopover. Airport-to-city shuttle bus **AirCoach** runs 24 hours every 15 minutes to Dublin's hotel and business districts in 45 minutes. The fare is €7 one-way or €12 round-trip (children 11 & under free); buy tickets from the driver. **BY BUS** **Bus Éireann** (☎ 01/836-6111; www.buseireann.ie) runs daily express coach and local service from major cities and towns in Ireland into Dublin's central bus station, **Busáras**, Store Street.

BY TRAIN **Irish Rail** (☎ 01/850-366222; www.irishrail.ie), also called **Ianród Éireann**, runs daily service to Dublin from all major cities in Ireland. The major train stations in Dublin are **Heuston Station**, Kingsbridge, off St. John's Road; **Connolly Station**, Amiens Street; and **Pearse Station**, Westland Row, Tara Street. **BY CAR** All main roads lead into Dublin and are well signposted to An Lar (City Centre). To bypass the city center, the East Link (toll bridge €1.90) and West Link are signposted, and M50 circuits the city on three sides.

BY FERRY Several passenger and car ferries arrive direct from Britain. Call **Irish Ferries** (☎ 0818/300-400; www.irishferries.ie), **P&O Irish Sea** (☎ 01/800-409049; www.poirishsea.com), or **Stena Line** (☎ 01/204-7777; www.stenaline.com). There is bus and taxi service from all ports.

Dentists & Doctors

DENTISTS **Eastern Health Board Headquarters**, Parkgate Street Business Centre (☎ 01/635-2500); **Molesworth Clinic**, 2 Molesworth Place (☎ 01/661-5544). **DOCTORS** **Dame Street Medical Centre**, 16 Dame St. (☎ 01/679-0754), or the **Suffolk Street Surgery**, 107 Grafton St. (☎ 01/679-8181).

Internet

Dublin has many Internet cafes, including **CentralCybercafe**, 6 Grafton St. (☎ 01/677-8298), and **Right Click**, Camden Street (☎ 01/475-9681). Most large hotels have Wi-Fi. **Temple Bar** may have Wi-Fi soon.

Pharmacies

Some stay open until 10pm in the city center (none 24-hr.). **City Pharmacy**, 14 Dame St. (☎ 01/670-4523); **Boots the Chemist**, 20 Henry St. (☎ 01/873-0209); **Unit 113**, St. Stephen's Green (☎ 01/478-4368) and 12 Grafton St. (☎ 01/677-3000).

Police

Dial ☎ 999 for emergencies. Local police (Garda) stations include **Pearse Street** (☎ 01/666-9000), **Store Street** (☎ 01/666-8000), and **Harcourt Terrace** (☎ 01/666-9500).

Post Office

General Post Office, O'Connell Street (☎ 01/705-7000; open Mon–Sat 8am–8pm). A letter or postcard to the U.S. is €82.

Public Transportation

Most buses originate on or near O'Connell Street, Abbey Street, and Eden Quay on the Northside, and at Aston Quay, College Street, and Fleet Street on the south side. Bus stops, resembling big blue or green lollipops, are every few blocks on main streets. **DART** (Dublin Area Rapid Transit) trains link the city-center stations at **Connolly Station**, **Tara Street**, and **Pearse Street** with suburbs and seaside communities (Malahide to the north, Greystones to the south).

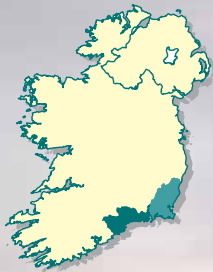
Taxis

Taxi ranks are outside major hotels, at bus and train stations, and on Upper O'Connell Street, College Green, and the Northside of St. Stephen's Green. To call a cab: **Co-Op** (☎ 01/676-6666), **NRC** (☎ 01/708-9222), and **VIP/ACE Taxis** (☎ 01/478-3333).

Telephones

The area code for Dublin is 01. Drop the "0" if dialing from outside the country.

Tourist Information **Dublin Tourism** ☎ 01/605-7700. Offices: Suffolk Street (main office), Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm, Sunday 10:30am to 3pm; June to August, Monday to Saturday 9am to 7pm, July and August also Sunday 10:30am to 5pm. Also on Upper O'Connell Street: 9am to 5pm. There is an information desk at the arrivals hall in Dublin Airport.



5 Counties Wexford & Waterford





Wexford & Waterford in 3 Days

Long stretches of pristine beach, dramatic mountains, and evocative historic monuments characterize these lush counties to the south of Dublin. Wexford has survived a long history of struggle and revolution, and several excellent museums are devoted to the region's tumultuous past. The county also has a distinctive, musical dialect, peppered with unique words and phrases—largely remnants of the now-defunct Yola language that was once spoken here. Waterford, famous for its fine crystal—now a brand regrettably in decline—is rich in archaeological treasures and spectacular scenery.



> **PREVIOUS PAGE** Hook Head Lighthouse in County Wexford. **THIS PAGE** The SS Dunbrody carried emigrants fleeing the Great Famine to America.

START **Wexford Town is on the N11. TRIP LENGTH 90km (56 miles).**

1 Wexford Town. Start off this route with a quick historical overview at the **Westgate Heritage Tower**. Then head to the ruins of **Selskar Abbey** a few blocks down the street. From there, the **Bull Ring** is a short hop; once used for bull baiting, it is now the venue for an excellent outdoor market held every Friday and Saturday. Another short walk will bring you to the Gothic-style **Twin Churches**, two of the most recognizable landmarks in Wexford Town. ☹ Half-day. For details on these sites, see p 140, "Wexford Town."

Leave Wexford on Rosslate Rd. (R730) south. After 2.5km (1½ miles), turn right onto the small road that runs through Coolballow and Latimerstown and follow signs for Johnstown Castle. 7.6km (4¾ miles).

2 ★★ Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition (Johnstown Castle). This afternoon, take the short drive out of town to this excellent museum on the grounds of Johnstown Castle. (The castle itself is closed to the public, but the grounds are a plum spot for a picnic if the weather's fine.) Extensive displays re-create the history of agriculture in Wexford, including a reconstructed blacksmith's forge. ☹ Half-day. For details see p 145, **3**.



From Wexford Town, head northwest on the N25 to New Ross. 39km (24 miles).

3 ★★ **New Ross.** After spending the night in Wexford Town, start your second day with a short drive to the town of New Ross, on the border with Kilkenny. First stop is the **JFK Trust Dunbrody**, the best of several attractions in the county named after the 35th U.S. president, whose great-grandfather, Patrick Kennedy, departed for Boston from here in 1848. Also on-site is the **SS Dunbrody**, a replica of an emigrant ship from 1845. ☉ Half-day. For details see p 146, "Around Wexford."

Retrace your route on the N25 to Ballynabola. Take the R736 south to Wellington Bridge. 24km (15 miles).

4 **Hook Peninsula.** Also known as the Ring of Hook, this beautiful drive is famous for its historic treasures, spectacular rocky headland, and secluded beaches. Make as many stops along the way as time allows, but be sure to visit the magnificent ruins of **Tintern Abbey**, overlooking Bannow Bay, and **Dunbrody Abbey**, near Duncannon. ☉ Half-day. For a Ring of Hook minitour, see p 138, "Wexford & Waterford in One Week."

Where to Stay & Dine

In Wexford Town, see p 143; around Wexford, see p 147; in Waterford City, see p 151; around Waterford, see p 154.

From Duncannon, take the R773 and R683. Then take the R709 and the R686 west to Waterford. 19km (12 miles).

5 **Waterford.** Hit the streets early this morning, after spending your second night in Waterford. If you've got little ones, consider taking them first to the **Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum**. It's a pretty impressive visitor center, and kids will particularly appreciate the snazzy, high-tech approach (including a 3-D film). Otherwise, for a less frenetic introduction to the town's long history, try **Reginald's Tower**, Ireland's oldest building in continuous use since 1003. Take a quick look at the **Holy Trinity Cathedrals** on your way to the **Garner Lane Arts Centre**. Spend the afternoon at the gorgeous **Mahon Falls**, a short but memorable drive out of Waterford City. ☉ 1 day. For details see p 148, "Waterford City."

To return to Wexford Town, take the N25 out of Waterford, heading east. 61km (38 miles).

Wexford & Waterford in 1 Week

This tour expands upon the 3-day tour at the beginning of this chapter. You could reverse it by starting in Enniscorthy and spending the first 3 nights in Wexford Town while you explore the surrounding area, including the Hook Peninsula. You could then use Waterford City as a base for the remaining parts of the tour.

START Lismore is on the N72. **TRIP LENGTH** 193km (120 miles).

1 ★ Lismore. This lovely old slip of a town has more than its share of the region's historical treasures. Start by visiting the **Lismore Heritage Centre** and then wander the beautiful grounds of **Lismore Castle**. ☉ Half day. For details, see p 152, "Around Waterford."

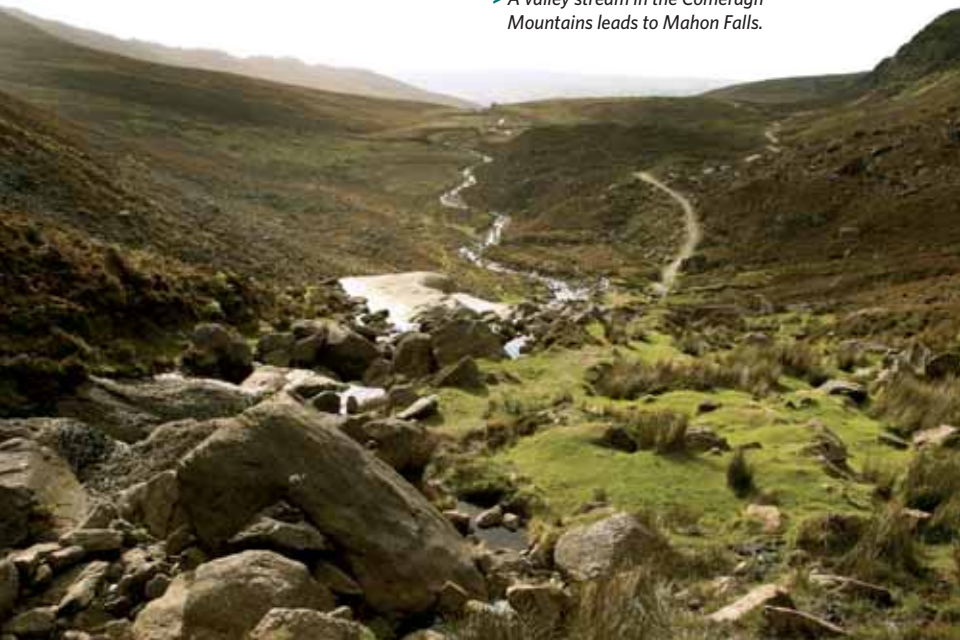
Leave Lismore on the N25 east. Just after Knockyelan, turn left to Lemybrien and up to Mahon Bridge. Then see p 164, 3 for directions. 40km (25 miles).

2 ★ Mahon Falls. If the weather is good, this little diversion on the way to Waterford is worth every mile for the magnificent views on the way to the waterfall, which is impressive in itself. ☉ 1 hr. For details see p 164, "Wexford & Waterford Outdoors."

From Dungarvan, head northeast on the N25 to Waterford City. 45km (28 miles).

3 Waterford. Start your tour of Ireland's oldest town at the **Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum**. It's a pretty impressive

> A valley stream in the Comeragh Mountains leads to Mahon Falls.





>An actress plays the part of a 19th-century émigré on a replica of the SS Dunbrody.



>Built to last, Enniscorthy Castle, overlooking the River Slaney, dates from the 13th century.

visitor center, if a little frenetic. For a quieter introduction to the town's long history, try the thousand year-old **Reginald's Tower**. Take a quick look at the **Holy Trinity Cathedrals** on your way to the **Garner Lane Arts Centre**. Spend the night in Waterford. ☹1 day. For details, see p 148, "Waterford City."

Continue on the N25, heading northeast out of Waterford to New Ross. 23km (14 miles).

4 ★★ New Ross. The first stop here is the **JFK Trust Dunbrody**, the best of several attractions in the county dedicated in some way or another to the late U.S. president, whose great grandfather departed for the U.S. from New Ross in the mid 19th century. This is also where you'll find the **SS Dunbrody**, a replica of an emigrant ship from 1845. If you're not JFK'd out yet, stop at the **John F. Kennedy Arboretum**. Press on to Enniscorthy for the night. ☹1 day. For details see p 146, "Around Wexford."

From New Ross, take the N30 northeast to Enniscorthy. 32km (20 miles).

5 Enniscorthy. Day four starts a few miles north of this handsome and midsize town (at least by Wexford standards) at nearby **Ferns Granary**. It's a fine little ruin with a colorful history. Returning to Enniscorthy, start by visiting **Enniscorthy Castle**, home of the **Wexford County Museum**, followed by a look around the **National 1798 Visitor Centre**. History buffs will also want to visit **Vinegar Hill**, which overlooks the town. Have lunch here before heading to Wexford Town. ☹1 day. For details on these sites in Enniscorthy, see p 145, "Around Wexford."

Leave Enniscorthy on the N11, heading south to Wexford Town. 23km (14 miles).

6 Wexford Town. The short but verdant drive from Enniscorthy will take you past the **Irish National Heritage Park**, on the outskirts of Wexford Town. This is an excellent living history park, but it takes a few hours to explore, so plan to stop here before heading into the town center for the night. The next morning, wander around Wexford Town. The **Westgate Heritage Tower** provides a good historical overview; from there it's a short walk to the **Twin Churches** and the ruins of **Selskar Abbey**. If you're visiting on a Friday or Saturday, you'll also want to allow time to browse the weekly market at the **Bull Ring**. In the afternoon, take one of the Old Wexford Society's walking tours. You'll have to book in advance, but they're an excellent value. Spend a second night in Wexford Town. ☹1 day. For details see p 140, "Wexford Town."

Leave Wexford Town on the R730 or R733 southwest. Turn off for Rathlannon and follow signs to the Agricultural Museum and Johnstown Castle. 7.6km (4¾ miles).

7 ★★ Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition (Johnstown Castle Estate). We recommend devoting at least a few hours to this excellent museum. It's one of the region's best, just outside Wexford, on the grounds of Johnstown Castle (the castle interior is closed, but the grounds are open and worth a stop). If you still have time in the afternoon, you could squeeze in a visit to the nearby Yola Farmstead. ☹3 hrs. For details on these sites, see p 156.



➤ Larger-than-life chessmen at the National 1798 Visitor Centre represent the game of strategy played by Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen.

Leave Wexford Town on the R733 southeast to Wellington Bridge—the first town on our Ring of Hook minitour. 23km (14 miles).



**SITE
GUIDE**
PAGE 138

8 The Ring of Hook (Wellington Bridge). Rise early to explore this picturesque environment of rocky headlands and secluded beaches between Bannow Bay and Waterford Harbour. In medieval times, these were significant inlets

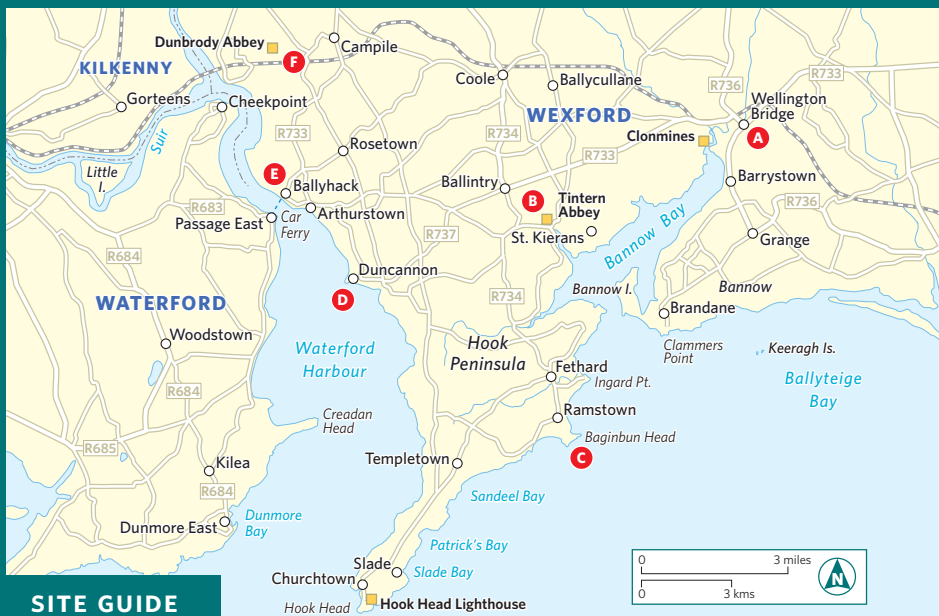
for travelers from England to Ireland, and the abundance of archaeological remains reflects that. The end of the peninsula, with its sturdy old lighthouse, is popular with birders during the spring and fall passerine migration. The following minitour guides you through a driving or biking tour, but hikers can also see most of the places listed from the Wexford Coastal Pathway. ☹ 1 day.

Shuttered Crystal Factory

After months of speculation, the **Waterford Crystal Factory and Visitor Centre** finally closed its doors in early 2009. It's not yet clear whether a buyer can salvage the ailing company—in which case the factory may reopen to visitors—but at this writing, no further information was available. Sadly, we've decided to leave it out of this book. For more information check www.waterfordvisitorcentre.com or www.waterford.com, or try calling the factory ☎ 051/332500.

Where to Stay & Dine

In Wexford Town, see p 143; around Wexford, see p 147; in Waterford City, see p 151; around Waterford, see p 154.



SITE GUIDE

8 The Ring of Hook

Just west of the town of **A Wellington Bridge** on R733 is a roadside stop on the left by a cemetery; from here you can look across Bannow Bay to the ruins of **Clonmines**—a Norman village established in the 13th century. It's a fine example of a walled medieval settlement, with remains of two churches, three tower houses, and an Augustinian priory. You can drive to the ruins—follow R733 another mile west to a left turn posted for the Wicklow Coastal Pathway, and continue straight on this road where the Coastal Pathway turns right. The ruins are on private land, so you should ask permission to view them at the farmhouse at the end of the road. Continuing west on R733, turn left on R734 at the sign for the Ring of Hook, and turn right at the sign for the 13th century **B Tintern Abbey** (p 146). The grounds are beautiful and encompass a restored stone bridge that spans a narrow sea inlet. At **C Baginbun Head**, a fine beach nestles against the cliffs; you can see the outline of the Norman earthwork fortifications on the head. Here the Norman presence in Ireland was first established with the victory of Norman forces over the Irish at the Battle of Baginbun. The tip of the peninsula, with its line of low cliffs, eroded in places

for blowholes, has been infamous for shipwrecks since Norman times. There has long been a lighthouse on this site; the present structure consists of a massive base, built in the early 13th century, and a narrower top dating from the 19th. The Ring of Hook road returns along the western side of the peninsula, passing the beaches at Booley Bay and Dollar Bay. On a promontory overlooking the town of **D Duncannon** is a fort built in 1588 to protect Waterford Harbour from the Spanish Armada. Just north of Duncannon, along the coast at the village of **E Ballyhack**, a ferry runs to County Waterford, and a Knights Hospitallers castle (see **Ballyhack Castle**, p 146) stands on a hill. A visit to the Hook Peninsula wouldn't be complete without a stop at **F Dunbrody Abbey**, in a field beside the road about 6.5km (4 miles) north of Duncannon. The abbey, founded in 1170, is a magnificent ruin and one of the largest Cistercian abbeys in Ireland. Although the site itself is left mercifully undisturbed, the visitor center across the road encompasses a craft store, a hedge maze, and—most incongruously of all—a pitch-and-putt golf course. It's also where one can request tours of the abbey, although availability can be spotty.



Wexford Town

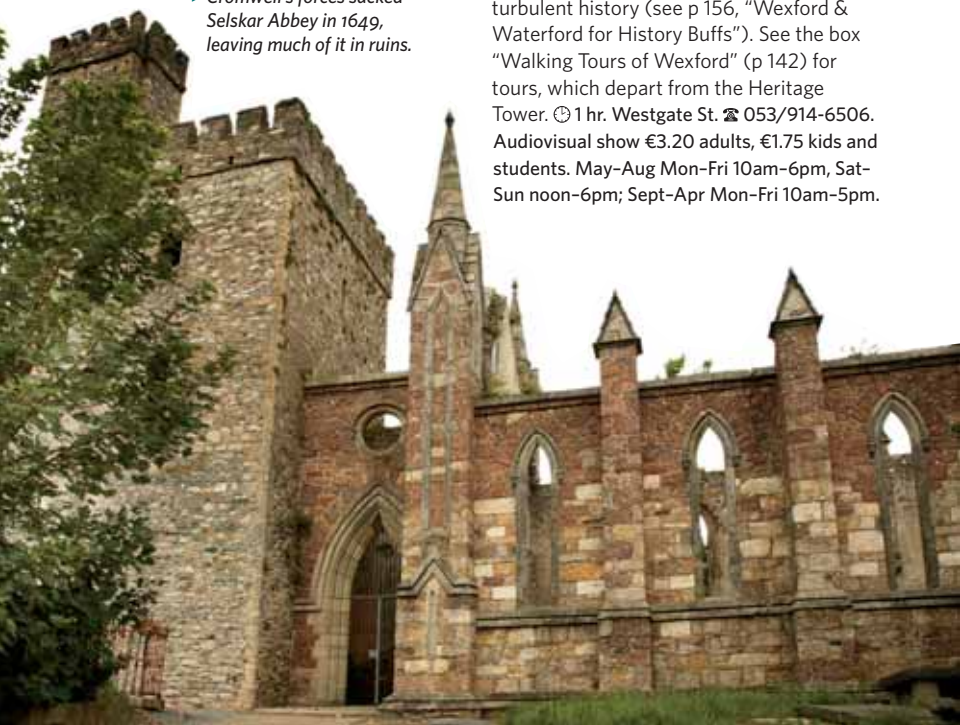
With a population of about 10,000, Wexford Town is a hardworking Irish harbor community with a surprisingly sophisticated social calendar, highlighted by a major opera festival in late October. Get started by walking the length of Main Street, taking time to detour up and down the alleys and lanes that crisscross it. The tourist office can supply you with a free map in case you want some guidance. You may want to start out by visiting the Westgate Heritage Tower (see below), which will provide you with valuable context and background information before you explore the rest of the city.

START **Ferrycarrig is on the outskirts of Wexford Town on the N11.**

1 ★ kids Irish National Heritage Park (Ferrycarrig). This 14-hectare (35-acre) park recreates various periods in Irish history, with the aid of an enthusiastic tour guide. There's also a nature trail and an interpretive center. It may sound like tourism-by-numbers, but it works rather well. ☉ 3 hr. For details see p 158.

➤ *Cromwell's forces sacked Selskar Abbey in 1649, leaving much of it in ruins.*

2 ★ Westgate Heritage Tower. This ancient tollgate once guarded the western entrance of Wexford Town. Sir Stephen Devereux had it built in the 13th century on instructions from King Henry. Like other town gates, it consisted of a toll-taking area, cells for offenders, and rooms for guards. Fully restored as a heritage center, it presents artifacts uncovered around the town, and screens a 30-minute-long informational film, which provides an exhaustive look at Wexford's complex and turbulent history (see p 156, "Wexford & Waterford for History Buffs"). See the box "Walking Tours of Wexford" (p 142) for tours, which depart from the Heritage Tower. ☉ 1 hr. Westgate St. ☎ 053/914-6506. Audiovisual show €3.20 adults, €1.75 kids and students. May-Aug Mon-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat-Sun noon-6pm; Sept-Apr Mon-Fri 10am-5pm.



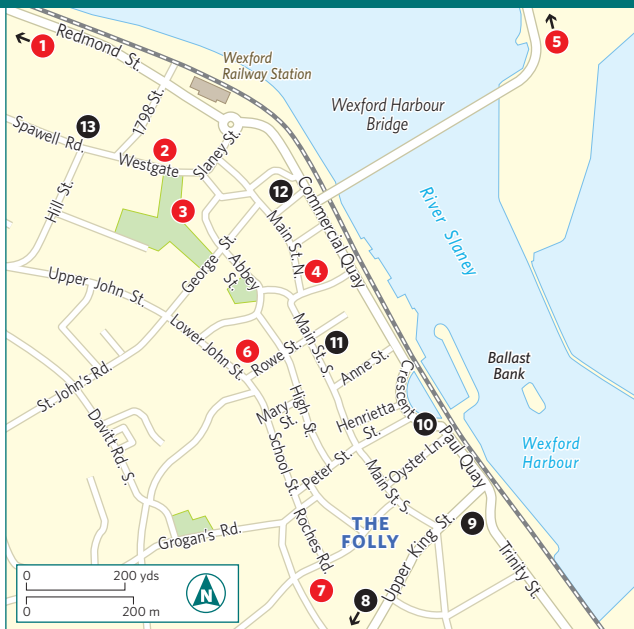
- 1 Irish National Heritage Park
- 2 Westgate Heritage Tower
- 3 Selskar Abbey
- 4 The Bull Ring
- 5 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve
- The Twin Churches:
- 6 Church of the Immaculate Conception
- 7 Church of the Assumption

Where to Stay

- Clonard House 8
McMenamin's Townhouse 13
Talbot Hotel 9

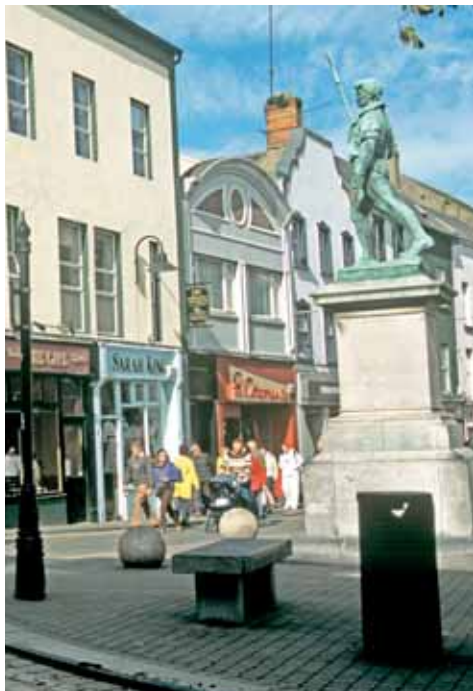
Where to Dine

- Forde's Restaurant 10
Mange2 12
Westgate Design 11



3 ★ Selskar Abbey. This early-12th-century abbey has often been the scene of synods and parliaments. The first Anglo-Irish treaty was signed here in 1169, and it's said that in 1172 Henry II spent Lent at the abbey doing penance for having Thomas Becket beheaded. Although the abbey is mostly in ruins, its choir is part of a Church of Ireland edifice, and a portion of the original tower is a vesting room. The adjoining graveyard has suffered much vandalism. The entrance most likely to be open is the one left of Westgate. ☹ 20 min. Off Temperance Row at Westgate St., Wexford. Free admission.

4 ★ The Bull Ring. In 1798, the first declaration of an Irish republic was made here, and a statue memorializes the townspeople who fought for the cause armed only with pikes (see p 159, "Downfall of an Uprising"). Earlier, in the 17th century, the town square was a venue for bull baiting, a sport introduced by the butcher's guild. After a match, the poor bull's hide was presented to the mayor and the meat was used to feed the poor. Today, activity at the ring is much tamer—a weekly outdoor market, open Friday and Saturday from 10am to 4:30pm. ☹ 30 min. (market). Off N. Main St. Free admission.



> Wexfordians baited bulls, and then the English, in the town's Bull Ring.



> Here are the churches, and here are the steeples—a view of Wexford's twin spires.

5 ★ Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. This national nature reserve is part of the unfortunately named North Slob, adjacent to Wexford Harbour, 5km (3 miles) east of Wexford Town. About 10,000 Greenland white-fronted geese—more than one-third of the world's population—winter here, as do brent geese, Bewick's swans, and wigeons. The area is immensely attractive to other wildfowl and birds, and more than 240 species have been spotted. The reserve has a visitor center, a new exhibition hall, and an observation tower and blinds. ☉ 1 hr. N. Slob, Wexford. ☎ 053/912-3129. Free admission. Apr 16–Sept daily 9am–6pm; Oct–Apr 15 daily 10am–5pm.

6 & 7 The Twin Churches: Church of the Assumption and Church of the Immaculate Conception. These twin Gothic structures (1851–58) were designed by architect Robert Pierce, a pupil of Augustus Pugin. Their 69m (226-ft.) spires dominate Wexford's skyline. Mosaics on the main doors of both churches convey a good bit of local history. ☉ 20 min. Bride and Rowe sts. ☎ 053/912-2055. Free admission; donations welcome. Daily 8am–6pm.

Walking Tours of Wexford

Proud of their town's ancient streets and antique buildings, the people of Wexford began conducting guided tours for visitors more than 30 years ago. At first it was a labor of love on the part of the Old Wexford Society, but now the tourism office runs the tours on a more formal basis led by local docents whose knowledge of the town and its history is unrivaled. Tours depart from outside White's Hotel on Abbey Street at 11am weekdays (although large tour groups can arrange for different start points). In any case, it's essential to book in advance. **Note:** A very small staff of local guides conduct the tours, so cancellations due to illness and the like are not unheard of. Wexford Tourism is pretty good at communicating if there's a problem, but it's best to call ahead on the day of your tour to confirm. ☉ 1 hr. Westgate Heritage Centre, Westgate St., Wexford, County Wexford. ☎ 053/916-1155. €5. Mon–Fri 11am.

Where to Stay & Dine in Wexford Town

★ Clonard House

On a hillside overlooking Wexford Town, Clonard House is a Georgian country home (1792) with high ceilings and rich architectural detail. It's attractively furnished with period antiques and has a marvelous historic feel. Most bedrooms have four-poster beds with orthopedic mattresses. **Clonard Great.** ☎ 054/43141. 9 units. Double €90. MC, V.

★★ Forde's Restaurant *BISTRO*

This waterfront venue has become one of Wexford Town's most in-demand restaurants. In many ways, it's a classic bistro, both in looks and in terms of the menu: Dublin Bay prawns with garlic, beignets of fresh crabmeat with ginger and basil, and an excellent sirloin with garlic butter. The wine list is well chosen and affordable, the crowd happy, the service professional. **The Crescent.** ☎ 053/912-3832. Entrees €19–€29. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily.

★ Mange2 *FRENCH FUSION*

This attractive restaurant does French cooking with a global twist. The mix won't be for everybody, but many will love the samosas filled with roasted red pepper and fennel with baby beets, or the pine nut fritter that accompanies the filets of sole. The wine list is modest and judicious. Fusion continues on the dessert menu, which might feature baked passion fruit ricotta cake with orange ice cream. **Above The Crown Bar, Monck St.** ☎ 053/914-4033. Entrees €17–€24. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★ McMenamin's Townhouse

At the western end of town, opposite the railroad station, this Victorian-style town house offers warm, hospitable accommodations at an affordable price. Guest rooms are nicely furnished with Irish antiques and brass beds. McMenamin's is run by Seamus and Kay McMenamin, who formerly ran a restaurant, and Kay puts her culinary skills to work by providing copious gourmet breakfasts complete with homemade breads and cereals. Some rooms don't have TVs. **3 Auburn Terrace, Redmond Rd.**



➤ Live music at Forde's Restaurant.

☎ 053/914-6442. www.wexford-bedandbreakfast.com. 6 units. Double €90. MC, V.

★ Kids Talbot Hotel

Beautifully decorated with warm red tones and gleaming wood, this is a good option in Wexford. The lobby and dining room are comfortable places to relax, with thickly cushioned chairs and plenty of sunlight. Bedrooms are midsize and contemporary. There's a nicely designed leisure center inside an adjacent 100-year-old grain mill, with a pool, steam room, and sauna. Spa treatments are also available, aided by a supervised children's play area, so parents can fully relax. Dinner in the restaurants or drinks in the bar are equally tranquilizing. **On the Quay.** ☎ 053/912-2566. www.talbotwexford.ie. 132 units. Double €180–€220. AE, MC, V.

★ Westgate Design *DELI*

The restaurant inside this popular arts shop serves fresh-made sandwiches, wraps, hot platters, soups, and salads at thoroughly reasonable prices. All the bread is made fresh, and you can eat your organic greens surrounded by original artwork. It's an excellent place to take a break in the afternoon for tea and cake. **22 N. Main St.** ☎ 053/23787. All items €2.50–€10. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

Around Wexford

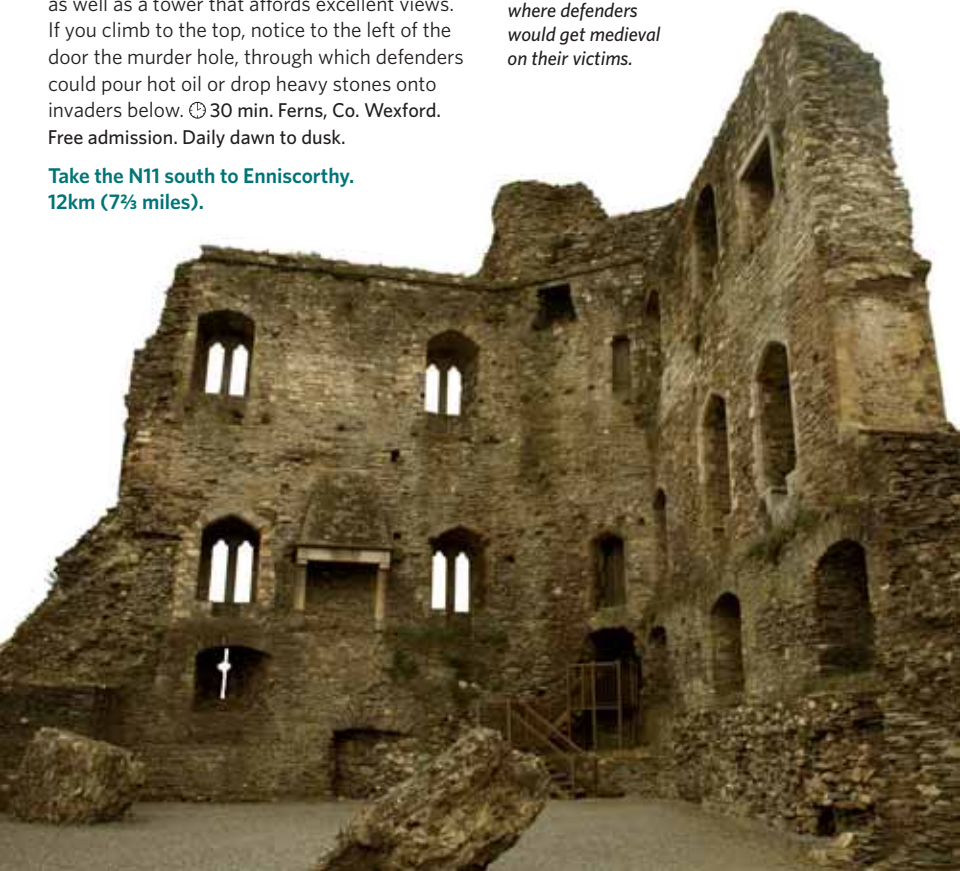
The Wexford countryside is a world apart from Dublin, though it's a little more than an hour away. Little white houses shimmer, ghostlike, on misty hills; three seasons a year, crisp air is laced with chimney smoke in the region's tiny villages; and the musical local accent is mesmerizing. History lovers will be drawn to the ruins of Ferns Castle, which played a pivotal role in the first English invasion of Ireland. Ballyhack and Enniscorthy also have fine, small but relatively complete castles. And New Ross is the ancestral home of John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States.

START Ferns is off the N11. TRIP LENGTH 110km (68 miles).

1 ★ Ferns. Ferns is worth a stop for its castle ruin. Built in 1221, the fortress that stood here was once forbidding; a moat and walls remain, as well as a tower that affords excellent views. If you climb to the top, notice to the left of the door the murder hole, through which defenders could pour hot oil or drop heavy stones onto invaders below. ☉ 30 min. Ferns, Co. Wexford. Free admission. Daily dawn to dusk.

> Check out the “murder hole” at Ferns Castle, where defenders would get medieval on their victims.

Take the N11 south to Enniscorthy. 12km (7½ miles).





2 ★ Wexford County Museum (Enniscorthy).

On the banks of the River Slaney at Enniscorthy, **Enniscorthy Castle** was built by the Prendergast family in the 13th century. Remarkably well preserved, it's now home to the **Wexford County Museum**, which focuses on the region's history and traditions. Displays include an old Irish farm kitchen, early modes of travel, and items connected with Wexford's role in Ireland's struggle for independence—especially the 1798 and 1916 risings. ⌚ 1 hr. Castle Hill, Enniscorthy. ☎ 054/35926. Tickets €4.50 adults, €3.50 seniors and students, €1 kids. June–Sept daily 10am–6pm; Oct–Nov and Feb–May daily 2–5:30pm; Dec–Jan Sun 2–5pm.

Take the N11 south, joining the N26 past Wexford. Follow signs for Latimerstown, Johnstown Castle, and the Irish Agricultural Museum. 27km (17 miles).

3 ★★ Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition (Johnstown Castle). Wexford's rich agricultural history is the focus of this museum on the grounds of Johnstown Castle. In historic farm buildings, the museum features exhibits on planting and diverse farm household activities. Large-scale replicas illustrate the workshops of the blacksmith, cooper, wheelwright, harness maker, and basket maker.



➤ A statue of U.S. President John F. Kennedy greets visitors to New Ross.



> *Tintern in Wexford was the “daughter” of the abbey with the same name of Wordsworth fame, in South Wales.*

The 19th-century Gothic Revival castle is closed beyond the entrance hall, which houses an information booth, but the grounds are perfect for picnics. ⌚ 1 hr. For details see p 157.

Return to the N25 and head north. At the junction with the N11, stay on the N25 to New Ross. 40km (25 miles).

4 ★★ kids New Ross. This comely medieval port was the birthplace of Patrick Kennedy, John F. Kennedy’s great-great-grandfather. Housed in twin 18th-century grain mills, the **JFK Trust Dunbrody**, the Quay (☎ 051/425239; www.dunbrody.com; €7 adults, €4.50 seniors, €4 students and children) tells the absorbing story of the Irish diaspora, from the monks who went to Europe in the 6th century to the present day. A section is devoted to JFK and his family history. The magnificent **SS Dunbrody**—a full-scale reconstruction of a tall 1845 emigrant ship—is moored on the quay as a floating exhibition center. The 240-hectare (593-acre) **John F. Kennedy Arboretum**, off Duncannon Road/R733 (☎ 051/388171; €3 adults, €2.30 seniors, €1.50 students and children) overlooks the thatched cottage where Patrick Kennedy was born. Plants and trees from five continents grow here. There are play and picnic areas and a miniature railway to amuse the kids. A hilltop observation point (at 266m/873 ft.) affords a view of Wexford and five other counties. ⌚ 4 hr.

Take the R733 south from New Ross to Ballyhack. 20km (12 miles).

5 ★ Ballyhack Castle (Ballyhack). On a steep slope overlooking the Waterford estuary, Ballyhack Castle is a large tower house from around 1450. Built by the Knights Hospitallers of St. John, one of the two great military orders of the Crusades, the castle is now a heritage information center with displays on the Crusader knights, medieval monks, and Norman nobles. ⌚ 1 hr. Off R733, Ballyhack, Co. Wexford. ☎ 051/389468. www.heritageireland.ie. Tickets €1.80 adults; €1 seniors, students, and kids. June–Sept daily 9am–6pm; closed Oct–May.

Take the R733 east to Balliniry. Turn right onto the R734 and follow signs for Tintern Abbey. 11km (7 miles).

6 ★★ Tintern Abbey. In the 12th century, after the Earl of Pembroke William Marshall nearly died at sea, he founded this rural abbey overlooking Bannow Bay to thank God for sparing him. The early monks were Cistercians from Tintern in South Wales. The remaining nave, chancel, tower, chapel, and cloister date from the early 13th century, though they have been altered. Extraordinary grounds include a stone bridge spanning a narrow sea inlet. Tintern Abbey is on the **Ring of Hook** (p 138). ⌚ 1½ hr. Saltmills, New Ross, Co. Wexford. ☎ 051/562650. Tickets €2.20 adults, €1.40 seniors, €1.20 students and kids, €6 families. Mid-May to mid-Oct daily 10am–6pm. Signposted 19km (12 miles) south of New Ross off of R733.

Where to Stay & Dine Around Wexford

★★ **Ballinkeele House** ENNISCORTHY

You'll feel at home in this grand 1840 manor. Gracious owners John and Margaret Maher beautifully decorated John's family estate house with rich color, heavy four-poster or half-tester beds, and other fine Irish antiques. Dinners in the Waterford-chandeliered dining room are excellent. The house is surrounded by hundreds of acres of fields and woodlands with gardens, a pond, pheasants, foxes, and other wildlife. Ballymurn, Enniscorthy. ☎ 053/913-8105. www.ballinkeele.com. 5 units. Double €160–€180. Dinner €40. MC, V. Signposted off N11, north of Wexford at Oylgate.

★★ **Kelly's Resort Hotel** ROSSLARE **BISTRO**

This family-run hotel was Ireland's first proper beachfront resort. Prices are high (for comfy, basic rooms) but all-inclusive for multinight stays. An indoor pool, a spa, squash, and tennis keep you busy. Food at **La Marine** is good, and nighttime entertainment is plentiful (if cheesy at times). Wexford–Rosslare Harbour Rd. ☎ 053/913-2114. www.kellys.ie. 116 units. €873–€940 per person for 7 nights. Kids' discounts available. AE, MC, V. N25, 16km (10 miles) south of Wexford Town, Rosslare.

★★ **Marfield House** GOREY **COUNTRY HOUSE**

This 1850 Regency manor, 65km (40 miles) north of Wexford, was the Earl of Courtown's home. Owners Ray and Mary Bowe added modern conveniences but spared period details; many rooms have four-poster beds and hand-carved furniture. Public rooms have crystal chandeliers and marble fireplaces. Cuisine is excellent, made with organic produce from the garden and served in a sky-lit Victorian-style conservatory. Courtown Rd., Gorey. ☎ 055/942-1124. www.marfieldhouse.com. 20 units. Double €255–€275. Dinner from €55. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **Riverside Park Hotel** ENNISCORTHY

On the banks of the River Suir, this contemporary hotel is a great base for exploring Wexford and the Blackstairs Mountains. Guest rooms are done in bold prints and vivid colors; front-facing rooms have balconies. Junction N11 & N30, the



➤ The seawater vitality pool at Kelly's Resort Hotel.

Promenade, Enniscorthy. ☎ 053/923-7800. www.riversideparkhotel.com. 60 units. Double €170. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Squigl** NEW ROSS **SEAFOOD**

This charmer in a converted barn behind a popular bar serves fresh local lamb, steaks, and, most notably, fish done to perfection. Start with the Duncannon seafood chowder, then a plate of Kilmore Quay scallops or monkfish with Jerusalem artichoke risotto. The bar serves less pricey pub grub. At Roches Bar, Quay Rd., New Ross. ☎ 051/389-188. www.squigrestaurant.com. Entrees €23–€30. MC, V.

★★ **Woodbrook House** ENNISCORTHY

At the end of a long drive through farmland and rolling hills, this 17th-century country house is pure Jane Austen. In the vast central hall, a wrought-iron “flying staircase” curves upward with no visible supports. Walls, done with elegant paint washes and *trompe l'oeil*, impart an intelligent sense of history. Calm, skillful, knowledgeable owners, Giles and Alexandra FitzHerbert, can help you plan your outings. Killanne, Enniscorthy. ☎ 054/925-5114. www.woodbrookhouse.ie. 3 units. Double €150–€170. Dinner €40. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr, except by special arrangement.

Waterford City

Waterford (pop. 42,500) is southeast Ireland's main seaport. Its proximity to the ferocious Atlantic Ocean makes it Ireland's windy city, with an unrelenting sea breeze. Archaeologists say it's Ireland's oldest city, founded by Viking invaders in the 9th century. A recent dig excavated much of the ancient remains, and some of the more striking finds are displayed in the Waterford Treasures exhibition at the Granary Museum. Because outlying County Waterford is so beautiful, many travelers don't linger long in town; the historic district around Reginald's Tower is intriguing, but Waterford is mostly a commercial center, dominated by its busy port.



➤ *A sea breeze always blows on the bustling port city of Waterford, Ireland's oldest, once settled by Vikings.*

START The Waterford Mall.

1 ★ City Hall. Headquarters of the local city government, this late-18th-century building houses local memorabilia, including the city's charter, granted in 1205. There's an absorbing display on the incredible life of Thomas Francis Meagher, a leader in an Irish insurrection in 1848; he was sentenced to death, but escaped to America, where he fought in the Civil War, rose to be brigadier general, and later became gover-

nor of Montana. City Hall's treasures include an 18th-century Waterford chandelier and priceless antique Waterford glasses. ☉ 45 min. The Mall. ☎ 051/73501. Free admission. Mon-Fri 9am-1pm and 2-5pm.

2 ★ Reginald's Tower. Circular, topped with a conical roof, and with walls 3m (9¾ ft.) thick, this mighty tower stands at the eastern end of the quay beside the river. It's said to have been built in 1003 by a Viking governor named Reginald and

- 1 City Hall
- 2 Reginald's Tower
- 3 4 Holy Trinity Cathedrals
- 5 Waterford Heritage Genealogical Centre
- 6 Waterford City Walking Tours
- 7 Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum
- 8 Garter Lane Arts Centre

Where to Stay

- Brown's Townhouse 13
- Days Hotel Waterford 9
- Foxmount Country House 14
- Granville 10

Where to Dine

- Bodega! 12
- La Boheme 11



has never fallen into ruin, which makes it Ireland's oldest standing building in continuous use. Still dominating the Waterford skyline, it's particularly striking at night when fully floodlit. Over the centuries, it has been a fortress, a prison, a military depot, a mint, an air-raid shelter, and now, a museum. ⌚ 30 min. The Quay. ☎ 051/73501. Tickets €2.10 adults, €1.30 seniors, €1.10 kids. Combined ticket with Waterford Treasures available. June–Aug daily 9:30am–9pm; May and Sept daily 9:30am–6pm; Oct–Apr daily 10am–5pm.

3 & 4 Holy Trinity Cathedrals. Waterford has two impressive cathedrals, one Catholic and the other Protestant, both built by one equal-opportunity architect, John Roberts. Roberts lived 82 years (1714–96), fathered 22 children with his beloved wife, and built nearly every significant 18th-century building in and around Waterford. **The Anglican or Church of Ireland Holy Trinity Cathedral** (conveniently nicknamed Christ Church) on Henrietta Street has a most peculiar spire and only clear glass, because its first bishop and rector disliked stained glass. **Holy Trinity** on Barronstrand is the only baroque cathedral in Ireland and has 10 unique Waterford crystal chandeliers. ⌚ 1 hr. Henrietta and Barronstrand sts. Free admission. Daily 7:30am–7pm.



➤ Your first order of business at Waterford's City Hall should be the display on Thomas Francis Meagher.



> Dating from 1793, Holy Trinity is Ireland's oldest Catholic and only baroque cathedral.

5 ★ Waterford Heritage Genealogical Centre. Did your ancestors come from Waterford? If so, follow the narrow lane between George's and Patrick streets to this historic building adjoining St. Patrick's and get the trained staff to trace your ancestry through church registers from 1655, surveys, rolls, and census lists. St. Patrick's Church, Jenkins Lane. ☎ 051/876123. www.waterford-heritage.ie. Free; basic search fee €90 by appointment. Mon–Thurs 9am–5pm; Fri 9am–2pm.

6 ★ Waterford City Walking Tours. Local guide Jack Burtchaell, who is well versed in the history, folklore, and witty anecdotes of Waterford, conducts an engaging hour-long tour of the old city. Tours leave twice daily from the reception area of the Granville Hotel on the Quay. ⌚ 1 hr. Mar–Oct daily noon and 2pm. €6 adults. For more information call Waterford Tourist Services, ☎ 051/873711.

7 ★ kids Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum. This impressive heritage center and museum, housed in a converted granary, unfolds Waterford's history from its earliest Viking origins. Along with an exceptional

collection of Viking and medieval artifacts recovered in the region, there's also an ambitious state-of-the-art multimedia show including a 3-D film. There's so much to see and do that the exhibitions can seem like a circus with too many rings, more chaotic than enticing. If you move along at your own pace, however, there's a lot to see and learn. There's also a gift shop and cafe. ⌚ 1 hr. Merchant's Quay. ☎ 051/304500. www.waterfordtreasures.com. Tickets €4 adults, €3 seniors and students, €2 kids. Combined ticket with Reginald's Tower available. June–Aug daily 9:30am–9pm; Apr–May and Sept daily 9:30am–6pm; Oct–Mar daily 10am–5pm.

8 ★ Garter Lane Arts Centre. One of Ireland's largest arts centers, Garter Lane occupies two buildings on O'Connell Street. No. 5, the site of the former library, holds exhibition rooms and artists' studios, and no. 22a, the former Friends Meeting House, is home of the Garter Lane Theatre, with an art gallery and outdoor courtyard. The gallery showcases works by contemporary and local artists. ⌚ 1 hr. 5 and 22a O'Connell St. ☎ 051/55038. Free admission. Gallery Tues–Sat noon–6pm.

Where to Stay & Dine in Waterford City

★ **Bodega!** *CONTINENTAL*

This party place draws a 20-something crowd with its great food, high volume, and conviviality. Choose from specials chalked onto the blackboard menu, which tends to be heavy on the fish and seafood. Everything's tasty, from sea bass with string beans and ratatouille, to a fish medley of cod, salmon, crab ravioli, and mussels. 54 John St. ☎ 051/844177. Entrees €15–€26. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat; late menu Fri–Sat 10:30pm–12:30am.

★★ **Brown's Townhouse**

This friendly Victorian B&B is within walking distance of the town center. Leslie and Barbara Brown are keen collectors of Irish modern art, and colorful paintings hang in every room. Bedrooms are spacious, with big windows and pleasant, old-fashioned decor. The best room has a roof garden terrace. Breakfast is grand, with pancakes, homemade breads and preserves, fruit salad, and eggs and bacon. 29 S. Parade. ☎ 051/870594. www.browns-townhouse.com. 6 units. Double €110–€120. MC, V.

★ **Days Hotel Waterford**

One of the city's oldest hotels, at the foot of the Ignatius Rice Bridge, this inn was recently refurbished by the Days hotel group. Lounges and dining rooms are now sleek with creamy walls, and guest rooms are similarly modern with comfortable Hypnos beds. Rooms are spacious with desks and chairs, and most are quiet, despite the busy location. 1 The Quay. ☎ 051/877222. www.dayshotelwaterford.com. 134 units. Double €100–€138. MC, V.

★★ **kids Foxmount Country House**

This elegant, secluded 17th-century country home is relaxing after a busy day of sightseeing. Rooms are attractively decorated with soft colors and antique touches. Two adjacent guest rooms share a separate alcove—perfect for a family with kids. Four double rooms have private bathrooms. All have pastoral views. Margaret's breakfasts are bountiful affairs. Passage E. Rd. ☎ 051/874308. www.foxmountcountryhouse.com.



➤ *The herb garden at Foxmount Country House.*

5 units. Double €110. 25% discount for kids 11 & under. No credit cards.

Granville

Along the quay side of Waterford's business district, overlooking the River Suir, the Granville was originally a coaching inn. Today it is a Best Western, restored to preserve its architecture, although the rooms are ordinarily contemporary with somewhat garish covers on the orthopedic beds. As a saving grace, some front rooms look out onto the river. The **Bianconi Restaurant** is popular and swank, but you'll have to book reservations. Meagher Quay. ☎ 051/305555. www.granville-hotel.ie. 98 units. Double €110–€200. AE, MC, V.

★★ **La Boheme** *FRENCH*

In an arched cellar beneath the Waterford Chamber of Commerce, La Boheme is effortlessly classy yet affordable. Classic French dishes, made from organic ingredients, include Clare Island salmon with beurre blanc, or fillet of Irish beef with Wexford mushrooms and red wine reduction. Service is slick, professional, and attentive but not uncomfortably so. The wine list is dizzying. 2 George's St. ☎ 051/875645. Reservations recommended. Main courses €23–€32. Fixed price menus: 3 courses €35 (Tues–Fri and Sat until 7pm); 3 course early-bird €29 (Tues–Fri only); 5 courses €55; 7-course tasting menu €75. AE, MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sat and Sun on Bank Holiday weekends.

Around Waterford

Walking or driving through the verdant countryside of County Waterford is half the pleasure of being here—provided you're not intimidated by winding country lanes, because public transportation is virtually nonexistent. Ardmore High Cross is a remarkable early Christian site, predating St. Patrick's missionary work in Ireland by a hundred years. Lismore, perhaps Waterford's most historic town, encompasses a fine medieval castle. Visitors can only wander the grounds, but the on-site Heritage Centre is fascinating and open to the public.

START Ardmore, off the N25, about 68km (42 miles) southwest of Waterford. **TRIP LENGTH** 84km (52 miles).

1 ★ Ardmore High Cross (Ardmore).

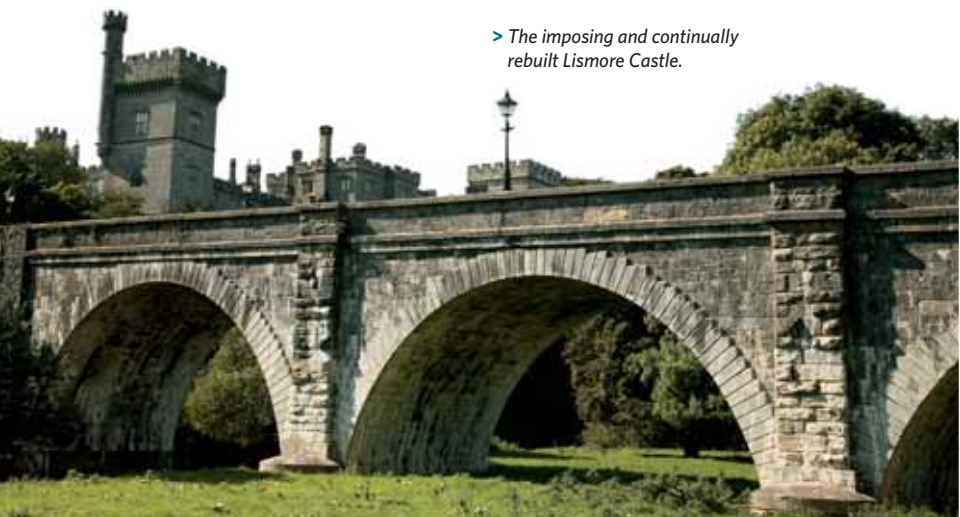
Ardmore (Irish for “the great height”) is a very ancient Christian site. St. Declan, its founder, is said to have been a bishop in Munster as early as the mid-4th century, well before St. Patrick arrived on these shores. Tradition has it that the small stone oratory in a cemetery high above Ardmore marks his burial site. St. Declan's Oratory is one of several stone structures here composing the ancient monastic settlement. The most striking is the intact 30m-high (98-ft.) round tower. There are also ruins of a medieval cathedral and, nearby, St. Declan's well and church. For more in-depth exploration, pick up a copy of *The Pilgrim's Round of Ardmore, Co. Waterford*, at a local newspaper

store for €3, or join the walking tour of ancient Ardmore, which leaves twice daily Monday to Saturday from the tourist information office at the harbor. Contact the tourism office for times. ⌚ 30 min. Ardmore tourist office, Ardmore Harbour.

Rejoin the N25 west toward Cork. Turn right onto the R634, and take this road until it joins the N72. Head northeast toward Lismore. 39km (24 miles).

2 ★ Lismore. High above the River Blackwater, the turreted **Lismore Castle** (☎ 058/54424; www.lismorecastle.com; gardens €6 adults, €3 children 15 and under) dates from 1185. Local lore says that Lismore Castle was once granted to Sir Walter Raleigh for 12 Irish pounds a year, though he never lived there. Richard Boyle, the first earl of Cork, rebuilt the castle, including

> *The imposing and continually rebuilt Lismore Castle.*





- 1** Ardmore High Cross
- 2** Lismore
- 3** Mahon Falls

the thick defensive walls that still surround the garden, in 1626, but most of the present structure is from the mid-19th century. You can wander the 3,200-hectare (7,907-acre) estate with gardens, forests, and farmland, but not the castle—the Irish seat of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, who won't admit the general public (excepting those rich enough to rent the place for €31,500 per week, including dinner, tea, and breakfast for up to 12 guests, June–Aug). In the town center's grand former courthouse, the **Lismore Heritage Centre** (☎ 058/54975; www.discoverlismore.com; €5 adults; €4 seniors, students, and children) tells the town's story from 636, when St. Carthage founded it. An interesting multimedia display celebrates the finest treasures, including the Book of Lismore, which dates back 1,000 years, and the Lismore crosier (1116). Both were found hidden in the walls of Lismore Castle in 1814. The center also runs several walking tours of the Lismore town and cathedral daily at 11am and 3pm. ⌚ 3 hr. Lismore Heritage Centre. ☎ 058/54975. www.discoverlismore.com.

Leave Lismore on the N72 west, which becomes the N25. Shortly after Knockyelan, turn left onto the R676 to Mahon Bridge. Then follow the directions to Mahon Falls on p 164. 45km (28 miles).



➤ The round tower at Ardmore overlooks the ruins of St. Declan's Oratory and the quaint fishing village below.

3 ★ Mahon Falls. We're not sure what's more impressive—this cascading 79m (260-ft.) waterfall, or the journey to get there. For a detailed description of the route, see p 164. ⌚ 30 min. round-trip.

To return to Waterford, backtrack to the N25 and head east. 35km (22 miles). If you're continuing to Cork, take the N25 west. 31km (19 miles).

Where to Stay & Dine Around Waterford



> Mediterranean fare in a laidback atmosphere at *Pastis Bistro*.

★★ **An Bohreen** DUNGARVAN

This sweet little modern B&B is the region's best value. The gracious sitting room has a fireplace; guest rooms have pine furniture, polished wood floors, and white bedcovers. The food is excellent: At dinner you'll feast on Dungarvan Bay fish soup, prawns and crab on brown bread, mushrooms stuffed with crabmeat, rack of lamb, and homemade desserts. Killineen W., Dungarvan. ☎ 051/291010. www.anbohreen.com. 4 units. Double €80–€90. Dinner €38. AE, MC, V.

★★ **Glencairn Inn** GLENCAIRN

MEDITERRANEAN Formerly Buggy's, this intimate farmhouse B&B has acquired a Gallic flavor since husband-and-wife team Stéphane and Fiona Tricot took it over. Rooms have buttermilk-colored walls and iron-and-brass



> Fresh seafood is front and center at the Strand.

beds, and en suite bathrooms still have big old-fashioned tubs. In the excellent **Pastis Bistro**, chef/owner Stéphane serves inventive French and Mediterranean fare made from mostly local ingredients: pan-fried hake or lobster and steak *frites* with a Jameson's whiskey and peppercorn sauce. The wine list is short but well-selected. Glencairn (4.8km/3 miles from Lismore). ☎ 058/56232. www.glencairnninn.com. 4 units. Double €95. Dinner from €45. MC, V.

★★ **The Strand Seafood Restaurant** DUNMORE

EAST SEAFOOD This intimate restaurant, attached to two pubs, has a well-deserved reputation for outstanding cuisine and daily seafood specials, with stunning views of Waterford Harbour and the Celtic Sea. Try the grilled wild salmon with green gooseberry sauce or lemon sole stuffed with seafood



> You'll find Irish comfort with Gallic flair at the Glencairn Inn.

mousse. Main courses usually come with plates of crisp sautéed vegetables unmentioned on the menu, and a vegetarian choice is served daily. The dessert cart is a surprise treat. In the Strand Inn, Dunmore E. ☎ 051/383174. Entrees €13–€15. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily.

★★ **The Tannery** DUNGARVAN *ECLECTIC EUROPEAN* This impressive stone building on the quays was once a tannery. The successfully inventive fusion menu includes a perfect plum tomato soup, sea bream with pepperoni and saffron-laced potatoes, and French toast with baked apples and Chantilly cream. Quay St., Dungarvan (beside the library). ☎ 058/45420. www.tannery.ie. Entrees €18–€28. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch Tues–Fri; brunch Sun; dinner Tues–Sun.



> Eclectic fusion cuisine at the Tannery.

Wexford & Waterford for History Buffs

Wexford and Waterford (Ireland's oldest town) have long been contested territories. Viking sea rovers first settled Wexford in the 9th century; its name evolved from the Viking term *Waesfjord*, meaning harbor of the mud flats. By the end of the 12th century, Normans had overtaken it, and you can still see remnants of their fort at the Irish National Heritage Park. In 1649, Oliver Cromwell's armies sacked Wexford and notoriously massacred 1,500 of the town's 2,000 Irish Catholic residents. And the National 1798 Visitor Centre in Enniscorthy does a reasonably good job conveying the story of another bloody uprising that left thousands dead—the 1798 rebellion.



>The 1798 Visitor Centre gives a youth-appropriate account of the birth of modern democracy in Ireland.

START **Tagoat, 16km (10 miles) south of Wexford Town on the N25. TRIP LENGTH 72km (45 miles).**

1 ★ Yola Farmstead (Tagoat). A voluntary community project, this theme park depicts a Wexford farming community as it would have

been 200 or more years ago. There are plenty of quaint thatched-roof buildings; bread- and butter-making are demonstrated; and crafts-people blow and hand-cut crystal at Wexford Heritage Crystal. It's touristy but nonetheless interesting. **The Genealogy Centre** (A



053/31177) is open daily 9am to 5pm. A consultation or one-name search costs €25. ⌚ 1 hr. Wexford-Rosslare Rd. (N25), Tagoat, Co. Wexford. ☎ 053/913-2610. Tickets €6 adults, €4.50 seniors and students, €3 kids. May-Oct daily 10am-6pm; Mar-Apr and Nov Mon-Fri 10am-4:30pm.

Backtrack on the N25 toward Wexford. After Sheepwalk, turn left on the road to Piercetown and follow signs for Johnstown Castle and the Irish Agricultural Museum. 13km (8 miles).

2 ★★ Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition (Wexford). Farming has been central to Wexford's history, and this museum does an excellent job of explaining why. Historic farm buildings contain exhibits on planting and the diverse activities of the farm household, including re-creations of a blacksmith's forge and several other farm craft workshops. The powerful Famine Exhibition contextualizes the effects and causes of the potato famine against the wider backdrop of Irish and European history. The museum is in the grounds of Johnstown Castle, which isn't open to the public, but you can wander the grounds. ⌚ 1 hr. Johnstown Castle, Bridgetown Rd., off N25, Wexford. ☎ 053/918-4671. www.irishagrimuseum.ie. Museum €5.50 adults, €3.50 students and kids. Separate charge for gardens. Museum June-Aug Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat-Sun 11am-5pm;



> The Irish National Heritage Park explores 9,000 years of Irish history with outdoor re-creations of ancient settlements and ritual sites.



➤ Give yourself a few hours to explore the 14-hectare (35-acre) Irish National Heritage Park with one of its captivating guides.

Apr–May and Sept–Nov Mon–Fri 9am–5pm (closed 12:30–1:30pm), Sat–Sun 2–5pm; Dec–Mar Mon–Fri 9am–12:30pm and 1:30–5pm. Gardens year-round daily 9am–5:30pm.

Take the N25 north, bypassing central Wexford. At the roundabout, stay with the N11 to Ferrycarrig. 8km (5 miles).

3 ★ kids Irish National Heritage Park (Ferrycarrig). The centerpiece of this absorbing and informative museum is a series of open-air reconstructions of various dwellings from the Stone Age to the early Middle Ages. Enthusiastic tour guides bring the past to life. There's also an interpretive center, a nature trail, and a cafe. ⌚ 3 hr. Off the N11, Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford. ☎ 053/912-0733. www.inhp.com. Tickets €8 adults, €6.50 seniors and students, €4.50 kids 13–16, €4 kids 4–12; kids under 4 free. Daily Mar–Oct 9:30am–6:30pm. Last admission 5pm.

Continue on the N11 to Enniscorthy. 19km (12 miles).

4 ★★ kids National 1798 Visitor Centre (Enniscorthy). Just south of Enniscorthy Castle, this exhibition is dedicated to the 1798 Rebellion and its aftermath. It's meant for kids, but its intelligent retelling of that sad and bloody chapter in Ireland's history will appeal to grown-ups. Displays are short on genuine artifacts, but the obligatory short film is actually good. The subject is handled with restraint verging on the dispassionate, which makes it all the more powerful. ⌚ 30 min. Millpark Rd., Enniscorthy. ☎ 054/923-7596. www.iol.ie/~98com. Tickets €6 adults; €3.50 seniors, students, and kids. Mon–Fri 9:30am–6pm; Sat–Sun 11am–6pm.

Leave Enniscorthy on the N30 southwest to New Ross. 32km (20 miles).

5 New Ross. The absorbing ★★ **JFK Trust Dunbrody** center tells the story of the Irish diaspora, from early Christian times to the present. A section of the center is devoted to U.S. President John F. Kennedy, whose great grandfather was born here. The ★★ **SS Dunbrody** emigrant ship is a full-scale reconstruction of an 1845 emigrant vessel. The visitor center skillfully puts emigration into perspective, and visitors can use the genealogy database. ⌚ 45 min. For details see p 146.

Where to Stay & Dine

In Wexford Town, see p 143; around Wexford, see p 147; in Waterford City, see p 151; around Waterford, see p 154.



The Downfall of an Uprising: Wolfe Tone & the 1798 Rebellion

Of the many Irish rebel groups that took hold in the late 18th century, the Society of United Irishmen, founded in 1791, was the furthest ahead of its time. Led by Wolfe Tone, considered the sire of Irish Republicanism, it welcomed Catholics and Protestants alike in its effort to gain independence for Ireland. The British were deeply uneasy about the group, not least because Tone enlisted help from France (in 1796, the French government sent 14,000 soldiers to join a United Irishmen uprising, but poor weather forced the boats back).

In 1798, the group tried again. Battles went down in Kildare, Carlow, Wicklow, and Meath, but English forces quickly won. Then, on May 29, Irish insurgents took Wexford Town, providing a massive boost to their cause. The success didn't last, though, and on June 21, the English army arrived at the rebel encampment on Vinegar Hill at the edge of Enniscorthy. The stage was set for a decisive battle. Fighting began at dawn and was over in less than 2 hours. More than 500 of the rebels died—but that was nothing compared to what happened next.

Weeks of atrocities followed, as loyalist troops killed an estimated 25,000 men, women, and children. Prominent rebel leaders were beheaded, and their heads were mounted on spikes outside the courthouse in Wexford Town. One of the more reluctant leaders of the group, a priest named John Murphy, was stripped, flogged, hanged, and beheaded. His corpse was then burned in a barrel, and Catholics in town were forced to open their windows so they could smell his body burn. The horrific massacre became a rallying cry for all subsequent Irish rebellions.

Vinegar Hill is at the east end of Enniscorthy, and although there's little there to memorialize the rebellion, it's a peaceful place with beautiful views. You reach it by crossing the bridge in town and taking the first right after Treacy's Hotel, then following the signs. There's also an excellent hour-long walking tour that includes the 1798 history, with lots of fascinating details. Contact **Castle Hill Crafts** (☎ 054/36800) for details.

Wexford & Waterford with Kids

In this region full of good museums, a handful appeal particularly to kids. Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum uses better-than-average audiovisuals and high-tech wizardry to create a lively, hands-on museum experience. Meanwhile, the Irish National Heritage Park takes the opposite approach, with good, old-fashioned storytelling; tour guides here are well-rehearsed and knowledgeable, and they don't talk down to children. In more conventionally kid-friendly fashion, the sprawling Pirate's Cove is an ideal place to allow younger ones to let off steam.



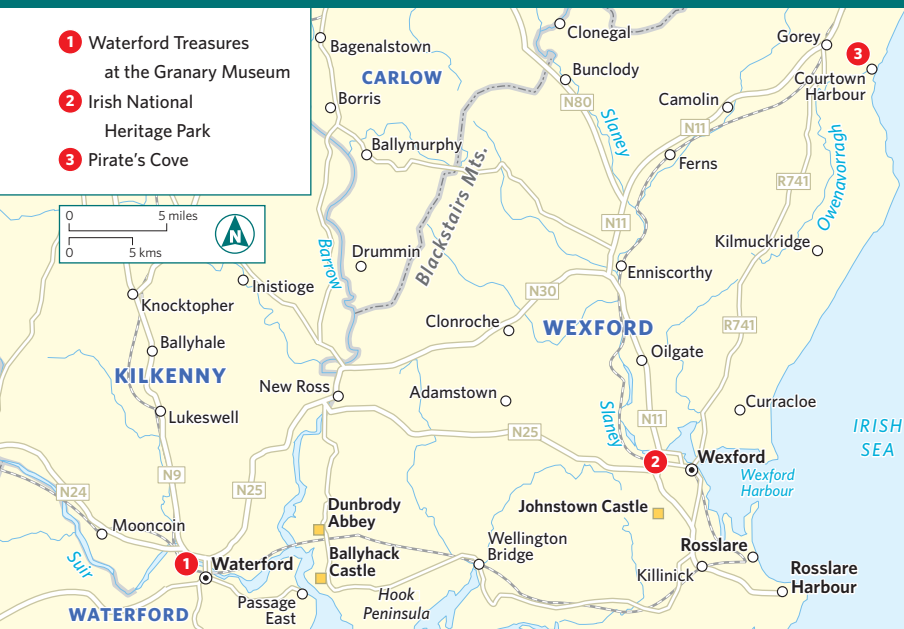
> Where else can kids clamber over Stone Age, Celtic, Viking, and Norman ruins but at the Irish National Heritage Park?

START Waterford City is on the N25. **TRIP LENGTH** 96km (60 miles).

1 ★ Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum (Waterford City). This impressive heritage center and museum dedicated to Waterford history features some diverting multimedia shows, including a 3-D film. All the activity can be overwhelming, but the flashiness tends to impress the youngsters. ⌚1 hr. Merchant's Quay, Waterford. ☎ 051/304500. www.waterfordtreasures.com. For details see p 150.

Take the N25 north. Follow the road through New Ross to Ferrycarrig. 57km (35 miles).

2 ★ Irish National Heritage Park (Ferrycarrig). This enormous park provides a good introduction to life in ancient Ireland, from the Stone Age to the early Middle Ages. The tour, led by head guide Jimmy O'Rourke, is great for families with kids—he masterfully brings each site to life, captivating children. There's also a nature trail and an interpretive center, complete with gift shop and cafe. Plan to spend several hours in the park. ⌚3 hr. For details see p 158.



From Ferrycarrig, continue into Wexford Town center and take the Harbour Bridge (R741) out of town. Follow this road for about 30km (19 miles) to Curratubbin. Follow the small country road to the right, through Ballinadrummin, Raheenbeg, Killena, and Borehovel, to Courtown Harbour. 40km (25 miles).

3 ★ Pirate's Cove (Courtown Harbour). By this time, your kids have endured a string of hushed museums and harsh reminders to stay off the ruins of half a dozen abbeys and castles. Now it's payback time. Pirate's Cove is what the little ones will remember best about Wexford. The amusements here include minigolf, bowling, go-karting, and bungee trampolines. It's all supervised, and there's a cafe on-site with a wine list. The downside is that you pay per activity, which can add up. Most cost around €7 to €10 per person, but bowling is an astounding €35 per lane, per hour. Don't bowl here. ☎ 1 hr. Courtown Harbour, Co. Wexford. 📞 053/942-5555. No general admission charge; cost of activities varies. Daily year-round 11am–9pm; outdoor activities closed in low season (usually Oct–Apr).

To return to Wexford Town, take R741, turn left, and head south. 36km (22 miles).



➤ *The many games and activities at Pirate's Cove will be a hole-in-one with kids after all those museums.*

Where to Stay & Dine

In Wexford Town, see p 143; around Wexford, see p 147; in Waterford City, see p 151; around Waterford, see p 154.

Wexford & Waterford Outdoors

Wexford and Waterford are defined by their open spaces. They are inherently rural, and even the major towns have an Arcadian feel. The Blackstairs Mountains, which dominate the border between Counties Wexford and Waterford, afford excellent hill walking, while bird-watchers flock to the Wexford Wildfowl Reserve and Great Saltee Island. On a clear day, you can't beat the view from Mahon Falls over that deep green valley.



> *The rolling Blackstairs Mountains have two high peaks, Blackstairs and Mount Leinster.*

START Wexford Town is on the N11. **TRIP LENGTH** 168km (104 miles).

1 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve (Wexford Town). Bird lovers will want to flock to this nature reserve, 5km (3 miles) east of Wexford Town, to take in the array of wandering wild birds. Regulars include migratory swans, geese,

and wigeons, along with hundreds of species of traveling birds. Once you've had your fill of outdoor fluttery action, you can wander the visitor center and learn more about the winged creatures. ⌚ 1½ hr. N. Slob, Wexford Town. ☎ 053/23129. Free admission. Apr 16–Sept daily 9am–6pm; Oct–Apr 15 daily 10am–5pm.



Where to Stay & Dine

In Wexford Town, see p 143; around Wexford, see p 147; in Waterford City, see p 151; around Waterford, see p 154.

Leave Wexford on the R730 south. Join the N25. Turn right onto R739 at the fork about 2.3km (1½ miles) later. Follow this road to Kilmore Quay to catch a ferry to Great Saltee Island. 23km (14 miles).

2 ★ Great Saltee Island. This little island off the coast of Wexford is a paradise for bird lovers. During May and June, its southernmost cliffs overflow with raucous avian residents, reminiscent of Hitchcock's thriller. You can get up close and personal with puffins (which nest in underground burrows), guillemots and kittiwakes. The island is privately owned, but visitors are welcome on the condition that they do nothing to disturb the bird habitat or the island's natural beauty. From April to September, weather permitting, **Declan Bates** (☎ 053/29684) provides boat rides there and back from the town of Kilmore Quay (about 16km/10 miles south of Wexford Town) at a price: €100 minimum for the boat. ⌚ Half-day.



➤ Kilmore Quay is the embarkation point for divers and birdwatchers headed to Great Saltee Island.



> A cyclist admires the picturesque coast of the Hook Peninsula.

Leave Kilmore Quay on the R736 northwest. Turn left onto the N25 and take it through New Ross and Waterford. At Lemybrien, about 30km (19 miles) after Waterford, turn right onto the R676. Follow the directions below from Mahon Bridge. 104km (65 miles).

3 ★ Mahon Falls. The scenic views to Mahon Falls are as impressive as the cascading 76m (250-ft.) cataract itself. The falls are in the Comeragh Mountains, on R676 between Carrick-on-Suir and Dungarvan. At the tiny village of Mahon Bridge, 26km (16 miles) south of Carrick-on-Suir, turn west on the road marked for Mahon Falls. Then follow signs for the falls and the “Comeragh Drive.” In about 5km (3 miles), you reach a parking lot along the Mahon River (in fact, just a tiny stream). The trail, indicated by two boulders, begins across the road. Follow the stream along the floor of the valley to the base of the falls. From here you can see the fields of Waterford spread out below you, and the sea as a glittering mirror beyond. ⌚ 30 min. round-trip.

To return to Waterford, backtrack to the N25 northeast. 42km (26 miles).

4 ★ Blackstairs Mountains (Enniscorthy). Across the border between Counties Wexford and Waterford lies the long, rounded ridge of

the Blackstairs Mountains. Among them is **Mount Leinster**, the tallest peak in the region at 796m (2,612 ft.). Remarkably unspoiled by tourism, the Blackstairs Mountains allow for plenty of beautiful walks and peaceful isolation. Guidebooks and maps are available from any sizable Wexford tourist office. Enniscorthy Chamber of Commerce, Abbey Sq., Enniscorthy. ☎ 087/410-0275. www.enniscorthychamber.ie.

The Best Outdoor Outfitters in Wexford & Waterford

Bicycling

You can rent mountain bikes in Wexford Town at **Hayes Cycle Shop**, 108 S. Main St. (☎ 053/22462). From Wexford, the road north up the coast through Curracloe to Blackwater is a scenic day trip. For complete 1- or 2-week cycling holidays in the Southeast, contact Bobbie Smith or Bill Passmore at **Celtic Cycling**, Lorum Old Rectory, Bagenalstown (☎ 059/977-5282). From Waterford City, you can ride 13km (8 miles) to Passage East and take the ferry (€3 with a bicycle) to Wexford and the Hook Peninsula. Or continue on from Passage East to Dunmore East, a picturesque seaside village with a small beach hemmed in by cliffs. The road from there to Tramore and Dungarvan is quite scenic.

Horseback Riding

One of the best residential equestrian centers in Ireland is at Horetown House, Foulksmills (☎ 051/565633). They offer riding lessons by the hour or in a variety of packages that include meals and lodging. Refurbished in 2007, Horetown caters particularly to families and children; for more experienced riders, lessons in jumping and dressage are available. Riding costs around €25 per hour; accommodations start at €100 for a double room, including an all-organic breakfast.

Sailing, Windsurfing, and Sea Kayaking

From May to September, the Dunmore East Adventure Centre, Dunmore East (☎ 051/383783), offers courses of 1 to 4 days that cost €43 to €90 per day, including equipment rental. Summer programs for children are also available. This is a great spot for an introductory experience, but there isn't much wave action.

Wexford & Waterford Fast Facts

Arriving

BY TRAIN Irish Rail provides daily train service to Wexford and Rosslare Pier. It serves O'Hanrahan Station on Redmond Square in Wexford (☎ 1850/366222; www.irishrail.ie) and Plunkett Station at Ignatius Rice Bridge in Waterford (☎ 051/873401; www.irishrail.ie).

BY BUS From Dublin, Limerick, and other major cities, **Bus Éireann** operates daily bus service to Wexford and Rosslare—into O'Hanrahan Station and Bus Depot on Redmond Square in Wexford (☎ 053/33114; www.buseireann.ie), and to Plunkett Station Depot in Waterford (☎ 051/879000; www.buseireann.ie). **BY CAR** From Dublin and points north, take the N11 or N80 to Wexford; from the west, take the N25 or N8. Two bridges lead into Wexford from the north—the Ferrycarrig Bridge from the main Dublin road (N11) and the Wexford Bridge from R741. The Ferrycarrig Bridge takes you into town from the west. The Wexford Bridge leads right to the heart of town along the quays. Four major roads lead into Waterford: N25 from Cork and the south, N24 from the west, N19 from Kilkenny and points north, and N25 from Wexford. **BY FERRY** Ferries from Britain run to Rosslare Harbour, 19km (12 miles) south of Wexford Town. **Stena Line** (☎ 053/916-1555; www.stenaline.com) handles service from Fishguard, Wales. **Irish Ferries** (☎ 053/33158; www.irishferries.com) has a route between Rosslare and Pembroke, Wales.

Doctors

In emergencies dial ☎ 999. **WEXFORD Abbey Street Medical Centre**, Abbey Street (☎ 053/912-2581), or the **Health Centre**, Millpark Road, Enniscorthy (☎ 053/923-3465). **WATERFORD Mary Street Medical Centre**, Mary Street, Dungarvan (☎ 058/41162).

Dentists

WEXFORD Redmond Square Dental Centre, Redmond Square (☎ 053/912-2364), or **Dr. Anne O'Donnell**, 3 Selskar Crescent (☎ 053/912-2008). **WATERFORD Dr. Derek Sheils**, 23 O'Connell St. (☎ 051/841774), or **Dr. Ray Bradfield**, 29 Lower Main St., Dungarvan (☎ 058/45266).

Emergencies

For police in nonemergencies, call ☎ 053/22333 in Wexford, and 051/305300 in Waterford. The **Wexford General Hospital** is on Richmond Terrace, Wexford (☎ 053/42233). **Waterford Regional Hospital** is on Dunmore Road (☎ 051/848000).

Internet Access

Internet is free at **Wexford Public Library** (☎ 053/21637), in Selskar House, off Redmond Square. Open Tuesday to Saturday, hours vary. **Westgate Computer Centre**, Westgate (☎ 053/46291), next to the Heritage Tower, is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Saturday. In Waterford, **Voyager Internet Cafe**, 85 The Quay (☎ 051/843843), open Monday to Saturday 10am to 9pm.

Pharmacies

WEXFORD John Fehily/The Pharmacy, 28 S. Main St. (☎ 053/23163); **Sherwood Chemist**, 2 N. Main St. (☎ 053/22875); or **Fortune's Pharmacy**, 82 N. Main St. (☎ 053/42354). **WATERFORD Gallagher's Pharmacy**, 29 Barronstrand St. (☎ 051/878103); or **Mulligan's Chemists**, 40-41 Barronstrand St. (☎ 051/875211).

Police

WEXFORD Rosslare Harbour (☎ 053/913-3204). **WATERFORD** Garda Station is on Ballybricken (☎ 051/305300).

Post Offices

WEXFORD Anne Street (☎ 053/22587). **WATERFORD** Parade Quay (☎ 051/317312).

Taxis

WEXFORD Wexford Cabs (☎ 053/23123) or **Wexford Taxi** (☎ 053/53999). **WATERFORD** Taxi stands are outside Plunkett Rail Station and along the quay opposite the Granville Hotel. Also call **Rapid Cabs** (☎ 051/858585), **Metro Cabs** (☎ 051/857157), or **Waterford Taxi Co-op** (☎ 051/877778).

Visitor Information The **Wexford Tourist Office** is on Crescent Quay (☎ 053/912-3111; www.wexfordtourism.com). The **Waterford Tourist Office** is at 41 The Quay (☎ 051/875788; www.waterfordtourism.com).





6

Cork City & County Cork



County Cork in 3 Days

Cork is the largest of Ireland's counties and one of its most diverse. It encompasses lively small cities, quiet country villages, rocky hills, picturesque beaches, and long stretches of flat, green farmland. Yet it still feels like a workaday place, where modern tourism meets real Irish life. Most of our favorite sites are within a few miles of Cork City. Begin this tour with a full day in the port town of Kinsale, Ireland's top destination for food lovers. After spending the second day in Cork City, travel down to Cobh, a bustling seaside town whose name may already be familiar to *Titanic* fans—and, quite possibly, to anybody with an Irish last name—as the main departure point for 19th-century emigrés.

START Kinsale is on the R600. TRIP LENGTH 49km (30 miles).

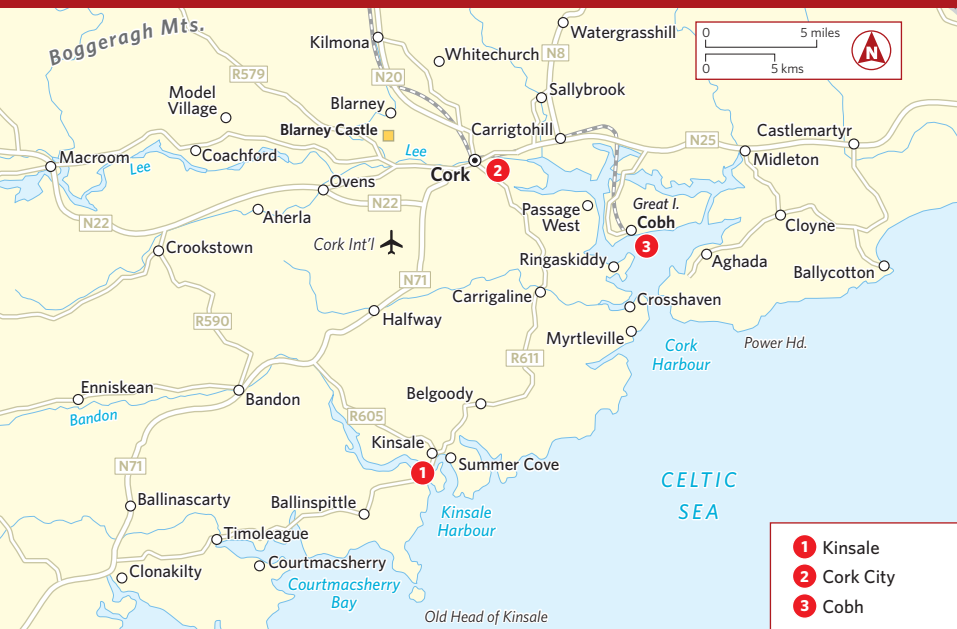
1 ★★★ Kinsale. This beautiful harbor town has spent the last couple of decades quietly transforming itself from a sleepy fishing community to one of Ireland's essential destinations for food lovers. So arrive in time for lunch (we suggest the **Fishy Fishy Café**) and plan to splurge a little on dinner. The joy of visiting this town (besides eating) is wandering the streets, though it does have some worthwhile sights.

Drop by **Charles Fort** and **Desmond Castle** (the latter houses quite a good wine museum). The **Kinsale Regional Museum** is also worth a look. If you're here early enough, you might consider taking one of Don Herily's excellent **Historic Strolls** (daily at 11:15am). ☺ 1 day. Kinsale tourist office, Pier Rd., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2234. www.kinsale.ie. For details on Kinsale, see p 186.

From Kinsale, head northeast toward Belgooly and join the R600 (becoming the N27) to Cork. 27km (17 miles).

> **PREVIOUS PAGE** A rainbow over Bantry Bay, County Cork. **THIS PAGE** Dating from the 17th century, Charles Fort was garrisoned until 1921.





2 ★★ Cork City. After spending the night in Kinsale, set aside day two for exploring Ireland's second city. Start with a look around the **Cork Public Museum** before browsing at the **Old English Market**. Either grab lunch on the fly there, or stop at one of the nearby restaurants. Then head to the **Crawford Municipal Art Gallery**, an excellent modern art museum. A trip to **St. Anne's Church**, a major local landmark, and the affecting **Cork City Gaol** should round out the day. Spend your second night in Cork City. ⌚ 1 day. For details see p 174.

Leave Cork on the N8. Then take the N25 east. Leave on the exit for the R624 (by Tullagreen and Slotty Bridge) and continue to Cobh. 22km (14 miles).

3 ★★ Cobh. If you're inclined, you could easily squeeze in a visit to **Blarney Castle** first thing this morning (it's just a slight detour, 8km/5 miles northwest of Cork City). Otherwise, stop off at the **Fota Wildlife Park** on your way down to Cobh (pronounced "Cove"). Formerly known as Queenstown, this small town played a disproportionately large role in Irish history. It was from here that millions of emigrants left to start a new life overseas in the mid-19th century, mostly in America. **Cobh, the**



> A glowering waxwork jailer keeps an eye on the stocks at Cork City Gaol.

Queenstown Story is an intelligent museum and heritage center that puts this mass exodus into perspective. After lunch, take a quick look around **St. Colman's Cathedral**. ⌚ 1 day. For details on these sites in Cobh, see p 209.

To return to Kinsale, take the N8 and the N25 past Cork City. Then join the N27/R600 south. 46km (28 miles).

Where to Stay & Dine

In Cork City, see p 180; in Kinsale, see p 190; in East Cork, see p 210; in West Cork, see p 217.

County Cork in 1 Week

This tour expands upon the 3-day tour. Foodies will want to make extra time for Kinsale (p 186), while history buffs may be drawn to spend more time in and around Cork City. Otherwise, take your time, and discover what else this rugged and energetic region has to offer.

START Cahermore for the coast road, then cable car crossing to Dursley Island. **TRIP LENGTH** 393km (244 miles).

1 ★ Dursley Island. Dursley Island is barren but starkly beautiful, at the tip of the Beara Peninsula. ☉ 1 hr. For details see p 212.

Take the R572 northeast to Glengarriff and catch a ferry to Innacullin. 55km (34 miles).

2 ★★ Innacullin (Garnish Island). An hour's drive up the pleasant, winding coast road lies this tranquil little garden paradise of an island. If you can't face two ferry crossings in a day, choose Innacullin over Dursley. ☉ 3 hr. For more on both, see p 212.

Back at Glengarriff, take the N71 south to Bantry. 18km (11 miles).

3 ★★ Bantry. Round out the day with a look around **Bantry House**, a fine Georgian home built in the mid-18th century for the earls of Bantry. There's an impressive collection of period furniture and objets d'art on display, but the gardens are Bantry's greatest feature. Originally laid out in the 19th century, they are landscaped along a series of terraces in the Italianate style. On sunny days, the views of the house and Bantry Bay from the top of the gardens are magnificent. For €200 to

> No one knows why ancient Celts constructed this ring of megaliths at Drombeg.





> On a clear day, you may see whales, dolphins, seals, and seabirds from the precipitous cliffs at Mizen Head.

€300, you can stay the night, though there are a couple of good alternate hotels and B&Bs nearby as well. ⌚ 1 hr. For details see p 214.

Take the N71 south out of Bantry. Turn right onto the R591 just after Dunbittern. Take this road to Goleen and follow signs to Mizen Head. 44km (27 miles) approx.

4 * Mizen Head.** The views from this cliff-top promontory, the southernmost point in Ireland, are spectacular. The visitor center in an old signal station is accessible via suspension bridge. If the weather's particularly fine, consider making a detour to nearby **Barleycove Beach**—one of the region's most beautiful. ⌚ 30 min. For details see p 216.

Backtrack on the R591. Then take the R592 to Ballydehob. Join the N71 east to Leap. Turn right on the R597 to Drombeg. 65km (40 miles).

5 ** Drombeg Stone Circle. On your way to this ancient stone circle, consider stopping at the charming town of **Ballydehob (Béal Átha Dá Chab)**—an arty village with an ancient stone bridge and a couple of charming pubs. At Drombeg, the 13 stones arranged to indicate the winter solstice sunset—remaining from what was a circle of 17—date from 153 B.C. Little else is known. What was it for? Who built it? Even the experts are stumped. ⌚ 15 min. For details see p 214.



> The name of Cork's Old English Market is a holdover from British rule; it was chartered by King James I in 1610.

History buffs can detour to the Michael Collins Memorial Centre in Clonakilty (p 214); otherwise, continue on the N71 to Bandon for the night. 34km (21 miles).

6 ★★ Cape Clear Island. This wild, graceful island 13km (8 miles) off the mainland is the southernmost inhabited point in Ireland. Come here for outstandingly beautiful walks, abundant wildlife, and a scattering of ancient sites. Plan to spend a leisurely day here before pressing on to Cork City for the night. ☹ 1 day. For more on Cape Clear, see p 204.

Back on the mainland, head northeast on the N71 to Cork City. 98km (61 miles).

7 ★★ Cork City. Ireland's second city will keep you plenty busy for 2 full days. Start with the **Cork Public Museum** for a good historical overview before whetting your appetite at the bountiful **Old English Market**. Cork is renowned for its arts scene, and best among its many art museums is the

Where to Stay & Dine

In Cork City, see p 180; in Kinsale, see p 190; in East Cork, see p 210; in West Cork, see p 217.

contemporary **Crawford Municipal Art Gallery**. Also worth a look are the **Lavit Gallery** and **Lewis Glucksman Museum**, on the campus of **University College Cork**. The city has two great churches, **St. Anne's** and **St. Fin Barre's Cathedral**, and a smattering of quirky museums; best among these are the **Cork City Gaol** and the **Cork Butter Museum**. Travelers with kids may want to check out **Blarney Castle**, or perhaps take a **Cork City Tour** in an open-topped bus. Visitors in late October can take part in the wonderful **Guinness Cork Jazz Festival** (www.corkjazzfestival.com). ☹ 2 days. For details on these sites in Cork, see p 146.

Leave Cork on the R600 south. 25km (16 miles).



> *Cape Clear Island is known for its rugged beauty.*

8 ★★★ Kinsale. We could happily spend a week in this harbor town, though we'd need a new wardrobe to cope with our expanded waistlines. Kinsale is a food lover's paradise, packed with outstanding restaurants. Any visitors coming this way in October should check the regional tourism websites to see if their visit will coincide with the 4-day **Gourmet Festival**. Otherwise, start by taking Don Herily's excellent **Historic Strolls** at 11am, then linger over lunch before checking out **Charles Fort, Desmond Castle**, and the **Kinsale Regional Museum** in the afternoon. Tip for the evening: Eat out. ☉1 day. See p 186.

From Kinsale, take the R600/N27 back to Cork, looping east around the city on the N25. Turn off at Tullagreen and take the road for Fota. 41km (25 miles).

9 ★★★ kids Fota Island. This small island in Cork Harbour contains a beautiful 1920s **Arboretum**, in addition to an excellent, thoughtfully designed **Wildlife Park**. It's a must if you're traveling with kids, though grown-ups like it too. ☉3 hr. See p 200.

Continue south to Cobh. 4.9km (3 miles).

10 ★★ Cobh. In the mid-19th century, millions of emigrés bid goodbye to Ireland from this small port town. **Cobh, the Queenstown Story** tells their tale. **St. Colman's Cathedral** is also worth a look, and Titanic fans will want to take the **Titanic Tour**. ☉Half-day. For more on Cobh, see p 209.

Backtrack up the R624 and follow signs for Barryscourt. 8.7km (5½ miles).



> *Murals decorate the buildings of Ballydehob, a small village with an outsize flair for the creative.*

11 ★★ Barryscourt. Round out the final day of your tour with a visit to **Barryscourt Castle**, a fine tower house-style fortification. Abandoned in 1645, the castle has been extensively restored. You can tour the main tower, furnished in the 16th-century style, and stroll the replanted herb garden. ☉1 hr. For details see p 207.

To return to Cork from Barryscourt, take the N25 west. 16km (9½ miles).

Cork City

Cork City is becoming known as Dublin South. It's far smaller than the capital, with 125,000 residents, but it's a busy, attractive, artsy hub where urban conveniences are seasoned by the local's appreciation for rural life. It's also a university town, which keeps the population young, the creative class dynamic, the pubs interesting, and the number of affordable restaurants plentiful. Cork has severe traffic congestion and can feel a bit gritty and crowded. For us, these flaws make it more interesting, underscoring the sense that it's a real, working city.

START Church Street, Cork City.

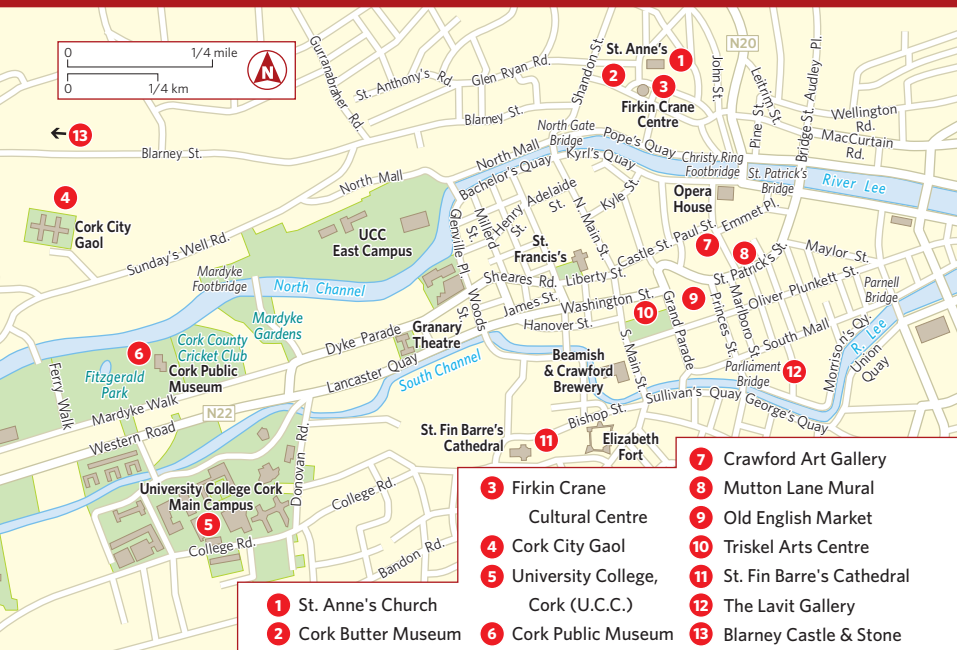
1 ★★ St. Anne's Church. Cork's prime landmark, also known as Shandon Church, is famous for its giant pepper pot steeple and its eight melodious bells. No matter where you stand in the downtown area, you can see the stone tower, crowned with a gilt ball and a unique fish weather vane. Until recently, due to a quirk of clockworks, it was known as "the four-faced liar" because each of its four clock faces showed a different time, except on the hour, when they all managed to synchronize. Somewhat sadly, that charming quirk has now been repaired. The Cork hurling and football teams took their respective colors from the red sandstone and creamy limestone walls of the steeple, which was built in 1722. Climb the belfry for the chance to play a tune on the famous Shandon Bells. If you continue on the

somewhat precarious climb past the bells, you'll be rewarded with spectacular views over the surrounding countryside. ⌚ 45 min. Church St. ☎ 021/450-5906. www.shandonbells.org. Tickets €6 adults, €5 seniors and students. Easter-Oct 31 Mon-Sat 9:30am-5:30pm; Nov-Easter Mon-Sat 10am-3pm.

2 ★ Cork Butter Museum. Started in 1770, Cork's butter exchange became the largest exporter of salted butter in the world, exporting around 500,000 casks of the stuff each year by 1892. The exchange closed in 1924, and it now houses the Shandon Craft Centre and the Firkin Crane Centre, a hot venue for contemporary dance performances. This museum is an unusual celebration of butter and the role it has played in Irish life from medieval times to the present day. ⌚ 45 min. John Redmond St. ☎ 021/430-0600. www.corkbutter.museum.

> A modern extension was added onto the Cork Public Museum in 1996.





> Sound effects and lifelike wax guards and prisoners make a visit to the infamous Cork City Gaol all the more spine-tingling.

Tickets €4 adults, €3 seniors and students, €1.50 kids 11 & under. Mar-June and Sept-Oct daily 10am-5pm; July-Aug daily 10am-6pm.

3 ★ Firkin Crane Cultural Centre. Dating from the 1840s, this unique rotunda was part of Cork's

original Butter Exchange, and the building's name derives from Danish words pertaining to measures of butter. Although destroyed by fire in 1980, the site was rebuilt and opened as a cultural center in 1992. Today, it is dedicated to contemporary dance and serves as a venue for

new dance works and for touring national and international dance companies. Performances are occasional; the best are usually reserved for the Guinness Cork Jazz Festival in October (see p 178). John Redmond St. ☎ 021/450-7487. www.firkincrane.ie. Tickets €15–€25. Opening times vary; call or go online to check.

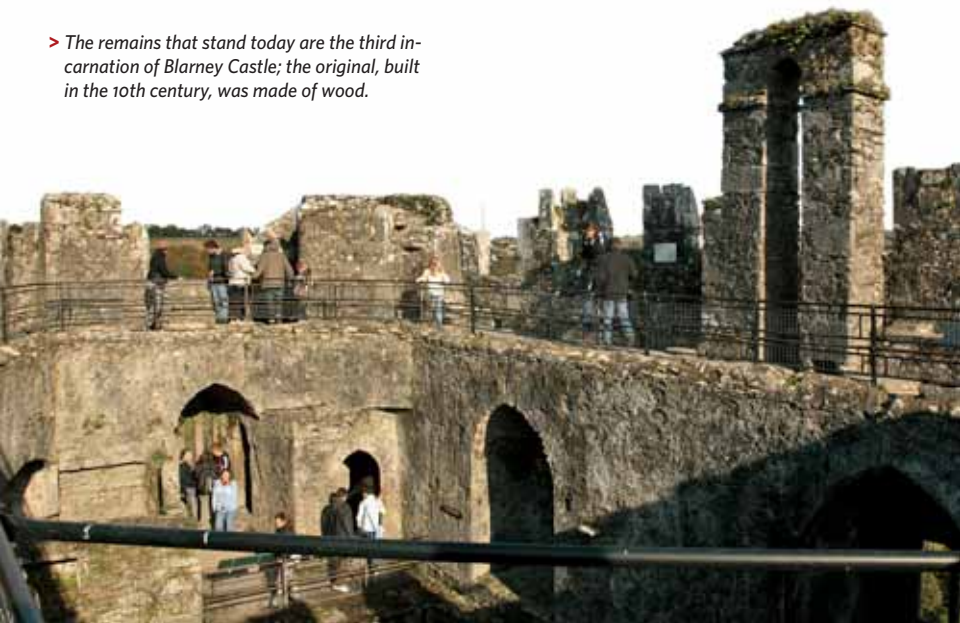
4 ★ Cork City Gaol. Less than 2km (1¼ miles) west of the city center, this restored prison was infamous in the 19th and early-20th centuries. In the 1820s and '30s, the cells held prisoners bound for Australia on convict ships. Later in the 19th and early-20th centuries, it housed some of the greatest figures in the revolutionary movement. Among them was Countess Constance Markiewicz (1868–1927), a Sinn Féin MP with a colorful bio (see p 362). She was the first woman elected to the British parliament (though she refused to take her seat), and she was sentenced to death for her part in the Easter Rising. When the sentence was commuted on account of her gender, she told the court, “I wish you had the decency to shoot me.” She later became the first woman in Europe to hold a cabinet position. Also here is the “Radio Museum Experience,” with a restored 1920s radio studio and an array of antique radio equipment and memorabilia.

🕒 1½ hr. Convent Ave., Sunday's Well. ☎ 021/430-5022. www.corkcitygaol.com. Tickets to gaol or exhibition €7.50 adults, €6.50 seniors and students, €4 kids, €20 families. Mar–Oct daily 9:30am–5pm; Nov–Feb daily 10am–5pm. Last admission 1 hr. before closing.

5 ★★ University College Cork (U.C.C.).

Part of Ireland's national university, with about 7,000 students, this center of learning is housed in a pretty quadrangle of Gothic Revival-style buildings. Colorful gardens and wooded grounds grace the campus. A tour of the grounds takes in the Crawford Observatory, the Harry Clarke stained-glass windows in the Honan Chapel, and the stone corridor, a collection of stones inscribed with the ancient Irish *ogham* written language. Also at the university is the **Lewis Glucksman Museum** (☎ 021/490-1844; www.glucksman.org), a new public art gallery and cultural institute that also holds a good shop and a riverside restaurant. The multi-award-winning building itself is as much of an attraction as the eclectic program of modern art, which changes regularly. Western Rd. ☎ 021/490-1876. visitorscentre.ucc.ie. University tours by arrangement €4, €15 families. Tickets to Glucksman Museum free. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm (Thurs until 8pm); Sun noon–5pm.

> *The remains that stand today are the third incarnation of Blarney Castle; the original, built in the 10th century, was made of wood.*





> Contemporary art spreads over 800 square feet of exhibition space at the Lavit Gallery.

6 ★ Cork Public Museum. This museum occupies a magnificent Georgian building in a park on the western edge of the city. Exhibits include models depicting early medieval times; artifacts recovered from excavations in the city, some dating back 4,000 years; and a working model of an early flour mill with an unusual horizontal water wheel. There's an archive of photographs and documents relating to Cork-born Irish patriots Terence McSwiney, Thomas MacCurtain, and Michael Collins. Antique Cork silver, glass, and lace are also on display. ⌚ 1½ hr. Fitzgerald Park. ☎ 021/427-0679. Free admission. Apr–Sept Mon–Fri 11am–1pm and 2:15–5pm; Sun 3–5pm.

7 ★★★ Crawford Art Gallery. The Crawford ranks among Ireland's best art galleries, with a strong collection led by works of Irish painters including Jack B. Yeats, Nathaniel Grogan, William Orpen, Sir John Lavery, James Barry, and Daniel Maclise. In a well-converted, 18th-century customs house, the gallery also holds sculptures and handcrafted silver and glass

Cork City Tours

These open-top buses let you hop on and hop off to explore the sights of Ireland's second city. They run all day in a loop from April to October, so when you see something you want to explore, just get off and rejoin the tour later. Or you can stay on the bus and use the tour to get oriented. Tour highlights include the Cork City Gaol (Jail), St. Anne's Church, and U.C.C. (University College Cork). You can buy your ticket on the bus if you get on at any of these stops, or buy a ticket and board the bus at the tourist office. Further details are available from the Cork Tourist Office. About 1 hr., full circuit. ☎ 021/430-9090. Tickets €13 adults; €11 seniors and students; €5 kids. Apr–Oct daily, with hours and number of tours reflecting seasonal demand.



> Don't forget to tip the attendant who holds you upside down to kiss the Blarney Stone.

pieces. A fine restaurant and bookstore are on the premises. ☉ 2 hr. Emmet Place. ☎ 021/490-7855. www.crawfordartgallery.ie. Free admission. Mon-Sat 9am-5pm.



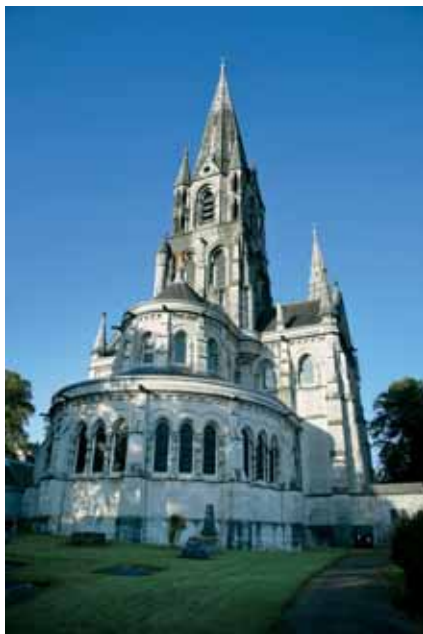
Guinness Cork Jazz Festival

Held every year since 1978, this is Ireland's biggest and most prestigious jazz festival. Big names such as Ella Fitzgerald, Oscar Peterson, and Stéphane Grappelli have played here over the years, and more than 1,000 performers from all over the world take part annually. It's held at various citywide venues in late October. Call ☎ 021/ 427-8979 or check www.corkjazzfestival.com for details. Tickets go on sale Sept 1; prices vary and some events are free.

8 ★ Mutton Lane Mural. In 2004, local artist Anthony Ruby painted a giant mural along the walls of Mutton Lane. It depicts musicians performing the traditional "Pana Shuffle," in a vivid and colorful evocation of peace and community spirit "dedicated to everyone except George Bush," Ruby wrote. ☉ 10 min. Mutton Lane, off St. Patrick's St.

9 ★★ Old English Market. The food stands at this wonderful, eclectic market brim with local meats, cheeses, fish, and traditional Cork fare, such as pigs' feet and blood sausage. For more on the Old English Market, see p 196. Grand Parade; enter from Patrick St., Grand Parade, Oliver Plunkett St., or Princes St. Mon-Sat 9am-6pm.

10 ★ Triskel Arts Centre. This ever-growing arts center presents a variety of entertainment—drama, poetry readings, opera, and traditional music concerts. There is also a full curriculum of daytime art workshops and gallery talks. The in-house restaurant is a stylish place to have a light meal or a cappuccino. Tobin St., off S. Main St. ☎ 021/427-2022. www.triskelart.com. Tickets €6-€20; some performances are free.



➤ *LEFT AND RIGHT Legend has it that the namesake of St. Fin Barre's Cathedral was so called for his fair (finn) hair (barra).*

11 ★ St. Fin Barre's Cathedral. This Church of Ireland cathedral sits on the spot St. Fin Barre chose in the year 600 for his church and school. The current building from 1880 is a fine example of early French Gothic style; its three giant spires dominate the skyline. The interior is highly ornamented with unique mosaic work. ⌚ 30 min. Bishop St. ☎ 021/496-3387. Tickets €3 adults; €1.50 seniors, kids, and students. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–5:30pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 2–5:30pm.

12 ★ The Lavit Gallery. Run by the Cork Arts Society, this gallery, in an early-18th-century Georgian house overlooking the River Lee, promotes the area's contemporary arts scene. The ground floor presents works by established artists, and the upper floor showcases up-and-coming talent. ⌚ 1 hr. 5 Father Matthew St. ☎ 021/427-7749. Free admission. Mon–Sat 10:30am–6pm.

13 kids Blarney Castle & Stone. Blarney Castle is extremely touristy but impressive looking. It was once huge, and the massive square tower

that remains has a parapet rising 25m (82 ft.). The famous Blarney Stone itself is wedged far enough underneath the battlements to make it uncomfortable to reach, but not far enough that countless tourists don't bend over backward, hang upside down over a parapet, and kiss it in hopes of increased eloquence. (For the record: We have never done this. We talk enough already.) It's customary to tip the attendant who holds your legs. In fact, you might want to do it before he hangs you over the edge. After bypassing the stone, take a stroll through the gardens and a nearby dell beside Blarney Lake. The Badger Cave and adjacent dungeons penetrating the rock at the base of the castle can be explored with the aid of a flashlight. ⌚ 1 hr. Blarney, Co. Cork. ☎ 021/438-5252. www.blarneycastle.ie. Tickets €10 adults, €8 seniors and students, €3.50 kids 8–14, kids under 8 free. May–Sept Mon–Sat 9am–6:30pm (June–Aug until 7pm), Sun 9:30am–5:30pm; Oct–Apr Mon–Sat 9am–sundown, Sun 9:30am–sundown. R617, 8km (5 miles) northwest of Cork City.

Where to Stay in Cork City



> Curbside service at Hayfield Manor Hotel.

★★ Garnish House

This is the best B&B on the Western Road. Hansi Lucey is a wonderful innkeeper who fusses over you like a cherished friend. The fresh tea and scones served upon your arrival are an inkling of the excellent food you can expect at the champagne breakfast. **Western Rd.** ☎ 021/427-5111. www.garnish.ie. 14 units. Double €90–€140. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ The Gresham Metropole

This elegant, historic hotel has been a local landmark for 100 years. Fully renovated, it now has comfortable rooms neatly designed with neutral decor, firm beds, and luxurious fabrics; an excellent bar and restaurant; and a full leisure center with pool, sauna, and steam room. The lobby and bar are pleasant and relaxing, and the restaurant food is handy when you're tired. **MacCurtain St., Tivoli, Cork.** ☎ 021/464-3700. www.gresham-hotels.com. 113 units. Double €155–€260. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★★ Hayfield Manor Hotel

Cork's only luxury hotel is decorated in apricot and ochre, and the magnificent foyer has marble columns and a grand mahogany staircase. Guest rooms are spacious with the feel of an elegant private manor home, large windows, and marble bathrooms. Less than a mile from the city center, near Cork's University College, it's still secluded. The fully equipped

conservatory/leisure center is inviting and welcoming to children—offering child-care, miniature bathrobes, and cookies and milk at bedtime. **Perrott Ave., College Rd.** ☎ 021/484-5900. www.hayfieldmanor.ie. 88 units. Double €230–€400. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Hotel Isaac

This place has a kind of stripped-down chic. Exposed brick walls, huge picture windows, and excellent use of light all combine to make you forgive the tired upholstery and weary carpet. Bedrooms are comfortable, with pine furniture and individual decor. There's also a cozy bar and an excellent restaurant, **Greenes** (see p 183). Still, prices are high under the circumstances. **48 MacCurtain St.** ☎ 021/450-0011. www.isaacs.ie. 47 units. Double €130–€150. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ The Imperial Hotel

Since 1845, the Imperial has hosted Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, and William Makepeace Thackeray. Michael Collins stayed in room no. 115 the night before his assassination. With Waterford crystal chandeliers, marble floors, and brass fittings, the public rooms have a 19th-century grandeur. Recently renovated, guest rooms are attractive enough in a warm, golden palette with dark wood furniture. There are plenty of modern conveniences, and the center city location is primo. **South Mall.** ☎ 021/427-4040. www.flynnhotels.com/Imperial_Hotel. 88 units. Double €160–€230. AE, MC, V.

★ Jurys Cork Hotel

This comfortably functional hotel overlooking the River Lee is a good budget option for families. The flat-rate room price covers up to three adults or two adults and two children. The brick facade and mansard-style roof blend in with Cork's older architecture, yet the interior is bright and modern with contemporary light-wood furnishings. **Anderson's Quay.** ☎ 021/494-3000. www.jurys.com. 133 units. Rooms €139–€250. Breakfast €10. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ Lotamore House

One of our most trusted, endearing standbys has gone chic. Overlooking the River Lee amid

Where to Dine

wooded grounds and gardens, 3km (1¾ miles) east of Cork City, this Georgian manor is impressive. But where it used to have a certain grandmotherly charm—sweeping staircase, ornate plasterwork, crystal chandeliers, and a fireplace from 1791—it now has matte, neutral colors, gorgeous mahogany beds, and soft linens. Breakfast is exceptional, with freshly squeezed juices, fresh fruit, and homemade scones accompanying the traditional Irish breakfast options. Lower Glanmire Rd. (Dublin-Waterford rd. N8/N25), Tivoli, Cork. ☎ 021/482-2344. www.lotamorehouse.com. 20 units. Double €130–€180. AE, MC, V.

★★ Maranatha Country House

Olwen Venn is the energetic hostess at this 19th-century manor house in the forests outside Cork. Each room is uniquely designed—one room evokes a cool forest; another uses 365m (1,198 ft.) of fabric in the draperies alone. The most luxurious quarters are in a huge ground-floor suite with a canopy bed and a large Jacuzzi. The breakfast conservatory looks like an explosion in a chintz factory, but the food is plentiful and delicious. Tower, Blarney, Co. Cork. ☎ 021/438-5102. www.maranathacountryhouse.com. 6 units. Double €70–€120. Discounts for seniors and kids 11 & under. MC, V. Closed mid-Dec to mid-Feb.

★ Silver Springs Hotel

On a hillside overlooking the River Lee 3km (1¾ miles) out of the city, this modern seven-story hotel is popular for local wedding receptions. It's surrounded by 17 hectares (42 acres) of gardens. Each room, outfitted with handcrafted Irish furniture and designer fabrics, has lovely views of the river, city, or gardens, and the exterior glass elevator affords lovely views of the countryside. Dublin Rd., Tivoli, Cork. ☎ 021/450-7533. www.silverspringshotel.ie. 109 units. Double €130–€180. AE, DC, MC, V.



> No meat, no problem at Café Paradiso.

★★ Café Paradiso VEGETARIAN

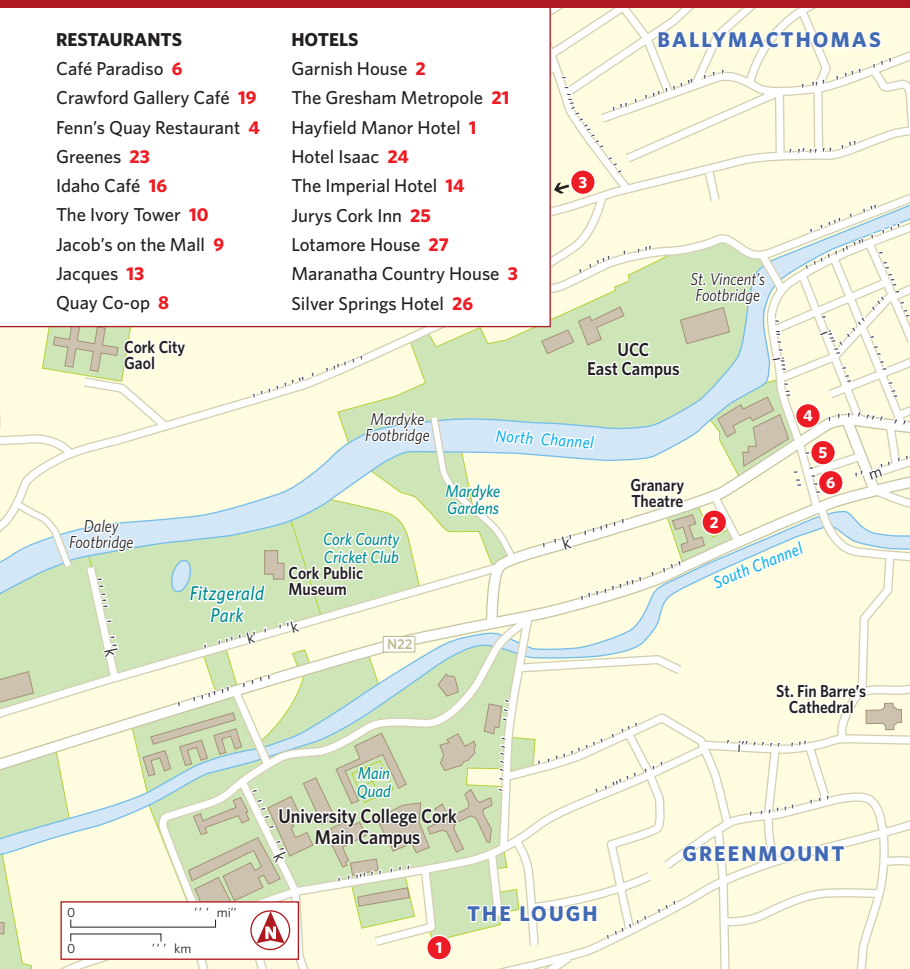
One of the region's best restaurants is vegetarian, serving organic local produce complemented by Irish farmhouse cheeses. Lunches feature understated but tasty sandwiches and fresh soups. Dinner might begin with vegetable sushi with tempura, then move on to sweet chili-glazed pan-fried tofu with Chinese greens in a coconut broth. 16 Lancaster Quay, Western Rd. (across from Jurys Hotel). ☎ 021/427-7939. www.cafeparadiso.ie. Entrees €24–€28. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Tues–Sat.

RESTAURANTS

Café Paradiso **6**
 Crawford Gallery Café **19**
 Fenn's Quay Restaurant **4**
 Greenes **23**
 Idaho Café **16**
 The Ivory Tower **10**
 Jacob's on the Mall **9**
 Jacques **13**
 Quay Co-op **8**

HOTELS

Garnish House **2**
 The Gresham Metropole **21**
 Hayfield Manor Hotel **1**
 Hotel Isaac **24**
 The Imperial Hotel **14**
 Jurys Cork Inn **25**
 Lotamore House **27**
 Maranatha Country House **3**
 Silver Springs Hotel **26**

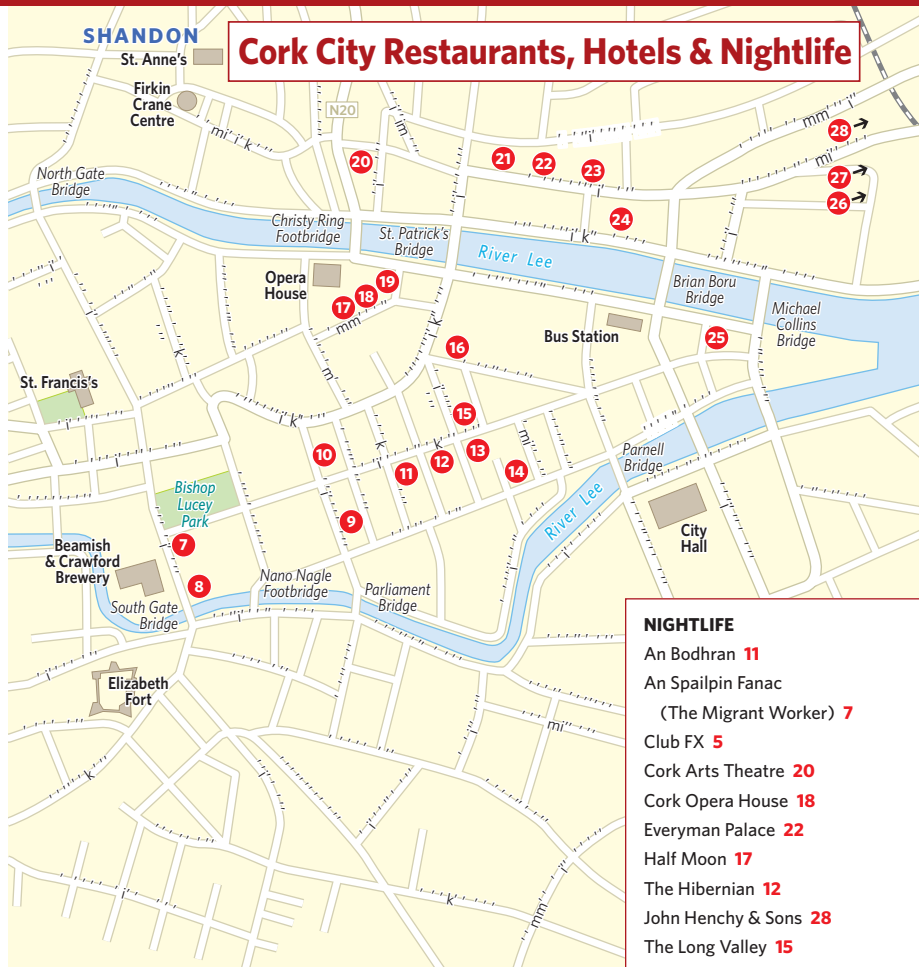


★★ **Crawford Gallery Café** *COUNTRY HOUSE*

In a ground-floor room at the Crawford Art Gallery, this popular bistro decorated with oil paintings and statuary is run by the Allen dynasty behind Ballymaloe House (p 210). Dinner includes such traditional dishes as lamb braised with vegetables and rosemary, while lunch features delightful salads and crepes. Seafood is caught daily from Ballycotton Bay, and baked goods come fresh from Ballymaloe ovens. Emmet Place. ☎ 021/427-4415. www.crawfordartgallery.ie. Set lunch €25; entrees €10–€15. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Fenn's Quay Restaurant** *INTERNATIONAL*

Eilish and Pat O'Leary's superbly restored 18th-century terrace house restaurant has staying power, attracting a well-heeled clientele with bold, creative dishes such as aubergine Charlotte with Gubbeen cheese custard and locally reared beef burger with tomato and horseradish ketchup and rough-cut fries. It's jammed at lunchtime when prices drop, so prepare to wait. 5 Fenn's Quay. ☎ 021/427-9527. www.fennsquay.ie. Early-bird dinner (6–7pm) 2-course €23, 3-course €27; entrees €17–€28. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.



Cork City Restaurants, Hotels & Nightlife

NIGHTLIFE

- An Bodhran **11**
- An Spailpin Fanac
(The Migrant Worker) **7**
- Club FX **5**
- Cork Arts Theatre **20**
- Cork Opera House **18**
- Everyman Palace **22**
- Half Moon **17**
- The Hibernian **12**
- John Henchy & Sons **28**
- The Long Valley **15**

★ **Greenes** INTERNATIONAL

In the Hotel Isaacs, this beautiful contemporary space has soaring warehouse-style ceilings, exposed brick walls, and big windows overlooking a waterfall. The attraction is the modern, understated cuisine featuring perfectly grilled meats and fish. Daily specials add variety. Hotel Isaacs, 48 MacCurtain St. ☎ 021/455-2279. Early-bird dinner (6–7pm) 3-course €27; entrees €18–€29. AE, DC, MC, V. Dinner Mon–Sun; brunch Sun.

★★ **Idaho Café** INTERNATIONAL

Patrons pack this place for the reliably good food. Lunchtime specials often feature Ummero bacon with minty new potatoes and cashews or crabmeat and tuna quesadillas. Everything is made painstakingly from fresh ingredients. To find it, turn off Patrick Street, directly behind the Brown Thomas department store. 19 Caroline St., Cork, Co. Cork. ☎ 021/427-6376. Breakfast €2–€8; lunch main courses €9–€10. No credit cards. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.



> A community effort keeps Quay Co-op cooking.

★★ **The Ivory Tower** FUSION

The Tower is unattractive outside, but what's in a facade? Insiders know how well American-born Seamus O'Connell innovates with fresh ingredients from local markets. The menu is a roster of unlikely combinations: swordfish on banana ketchup? Hot smoked salmon with lemon geranium sauce? Kumquats in Rioja wine? Not for the faint of heart, this place has many devoted fans. **The Exchange Buildings**, 35 Princes St. ☎ 021/427-4665. Fixed 5-course dinner €60; main courses €35–€40. MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sat.

★ **Jacob's on the Mall** INTERNATIONAL

In an old bathhouse, Jacob's is lauded for its fresh ingredients and attention to detail. Grilled mackerel comes with buttery new potatoes and a hint of fennel; crispy salmon is served with Chinese greens and noodles; and chicken breast comes with a dollop of lemon aioli. Light floods in through the tall dining room windows. 30A South Mall. ☎ 021/425-1530. www.jacobsonthemall.com. Main courses €17–€32. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Jacques** INTERNATIONAL

After a quarter century as one of Cork's top restaurants, Jacques remains devoted to creative, contemporary preparations of local ingredients. Waiters will tell you precisely where the meat and fish came from in dishes such as monkfish on bok choy with ginger and chili, or duck *a l'orange* with chard and Gubbeen bacon. The small dining room—with turquoise-backed chairs and tangerine walls lined with modern art—is a fresh backdrop for the food. 9 Phoenix St. ☎ 021/427-7387. www.jacquesrestaurant.ie. Early-bird dinner (6–7pm) €22; entrees €23–€29. AE, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri; dinner Mon–Sat.

★ **kids Quay Co-op** VEGETARIAN/CAFETERIA

The ground floor is a whole-foods store that sells fresh breads and cakes. The second floor, up a narrow, steep staircase, is a self-service restaurant with delicious soups, pasta, chickpea burgers, vegan options, and daily specials. 24 Sullivan's Quay. ☎ 021/431-7026. www.quaycoop.com. Entrees €7–€10. MC, V. Lunch & early supper daily.

Cork City Nightlife

Clubs

Club FX

Starting at 11pm on Friday nights, "Planet of Sound" fills four rooms with "delicious noise." Expect retro, hip-hop, and two live bands opposite Jurys hotel on Washington Street. Lynch's St. ☎ 021/427-1120. Cover €6.

Half Moon

After the main stage empties, the Cork Opera House Bar swings into action with an ever-changing program of blues, ragtime, pop, and rock, with comedy gigs on occasion. Open Thursday to Sunday from 11:30pm to 3am. Cork Opera House, Emmet Place. ☎ 021/427-0022. Cover €8-€15.

Performing Arts

Cork Arts Theatre

Formerly opposite the Opera House, this nonprofit theater now in Carroll's Quay presents contemporary dramas and musicals in an intimate, 100-seat space. Tickets are €6 to €15. Camden Court, Carroll's Quay. ☎ 021/450-5624. www.corkartstheatre.com.

Cork Opera House

Just off Lavitt's Quay along the River Lee, this is southwest Ireland's major venue for opera, drama, musicals, dance, and concerts. The original century-old opera house was completely gutted by a fire in 1955; this 1,000-seat replacement opened a decade later. Emmet Place. ☎ 021/427-0022. www.corkoperahouse.ie. Tickets €17-€50; average €25.

Everyman Palace

This elegant, historic theater 2 minutes from the bus and train station is well known as a showcase for quality new plays, both Irish and international. The Irish National Ballet also performs here regularly. 17 MacCurtain St. ☎ 021/450-1673. www.everymanpalace.com. Tickets €15-€40.

Pubs

An Bodhran

Irish traditional music at this friendly pub begins nightly at 9:30pm. Decor includes stone walls, dark woods, and a huge stained-glass window. 42 Oliver Plunkett St. ☎ 021/427-4544.

An Spailpin Fanac (The Migrant Worker)

Traditional Irish music starts at 9:30pm Sunday to Thursday. Opposite the Beamish Brewery, the 1779 pub has low ceilings, exposed brick walls, flagstone floors, open fireplaces, a simple wooden bar, and woven rush seats. 28-29 S. Main St. ☎ 021/427-7949.

The Hibernian

Despite the linoleum-covered staircase and mishmash of slightly threadbare upholstered armchairs and sofas, the "Hi-B" is always crammed with a cross section of Cork—from blue-collar regulars, students, artists, writers, and eccentrics, to well-heeled types. 108 Oliver Plunkett St. (corner of Winthrop St.). ☎ 021/427-2758.

John Henchy & Sons

It's worth the steep walk up Summerhill Road to reach this classic pub near the Arbutus Lodge hotel. Established by John Henchy in 1884, it hasn't changed much since then, with leaded-glass windows, thick red curtains, and a small snug. The original Henchy family grocery store still operates adjacent to the pub. 40 St. Luke's. ☎ 021/450-7833.

The Long Valley

This family-run, old-fashioned bar may enamor you before you even enter. Left of the entrance hallway is a snug with etched glass doors and chased silver doorknobs. Those doors came from the *Celtic*, a White Star ocean liner that ran aground in Cork Harbor. Inside the main bar is a long, low-slung room with a polished full-length wood bar. Barmen wear white butchers' coats and serve a steady flow of pints to the laid-back 30-something crowd. Winthrop St. ☎ 021/427-2144.

Kinsale

This former fishing village is enchanting—with its narrow, winding streets, well-kept 18th-century houses, imaginatively painted shop fronts, window boxes overflowing with colorful flowers, and harbor full of sailboats. Considered the gateway to the western Cork seacoast, this artsy town of 3,000 residents supports dozens of galleries and craft shops stocked with works by regional artists. A foodie hub, it draws culinary adventurers year-round, particularly in October for the 4-day Gourmet Festival. But the secret is out: Kinsale is now a tourist town, so prepare for parking problems, crowds, and tour buses.

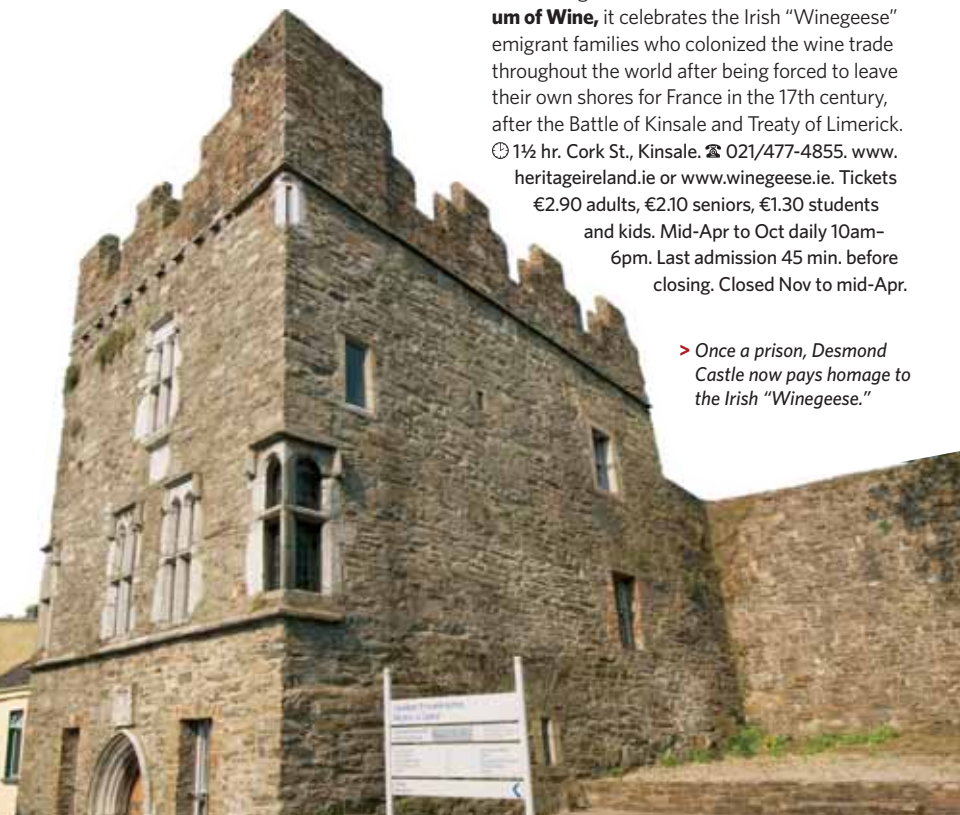
START **Cork Street, Kinsale.**

1 ★ **Desmond Castle.** Built around 1500 as a customhouse by Maurice Bacach Fitzgerald, the 9th earl of Desmond, this tower house has a dark history: Spanish troops occupied it during the battle of 1601, and the British later used it as a prison for captured American sailors during the

War of Independence. It's known as the "French Prison" because French prisoners were kept here during the mid-18th century. In a horrible accident, 54 French prisoners died here in a fire in 1747. During the Great Famine, the building was used as a workhouse for the starving populace. Now, in more peaceful times, the castle is much more benign. Home of the **International Museum of Wine**, it celebrates the Irish "Winegeese" emigrant families who colonized the wine trade throughout the world after being forced to leave their own shores for France in the 17th century, after the Battle of Kinsale and Treaty of Limerick.

🕒 1½ hr. Cork St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-4855. www.heritageireland.ie or www.winegeese.ie. Tickets €2.90 adults, €2.10 seniors, €1.30 students and kids. Mid-Apr to Oct daily 10am–6pm. Last admission 45 min. before closing. Closed Nov to mid-Apr.

> *Once a prison, Desmond Castle now pays homage to the Irish "Winegeese."*



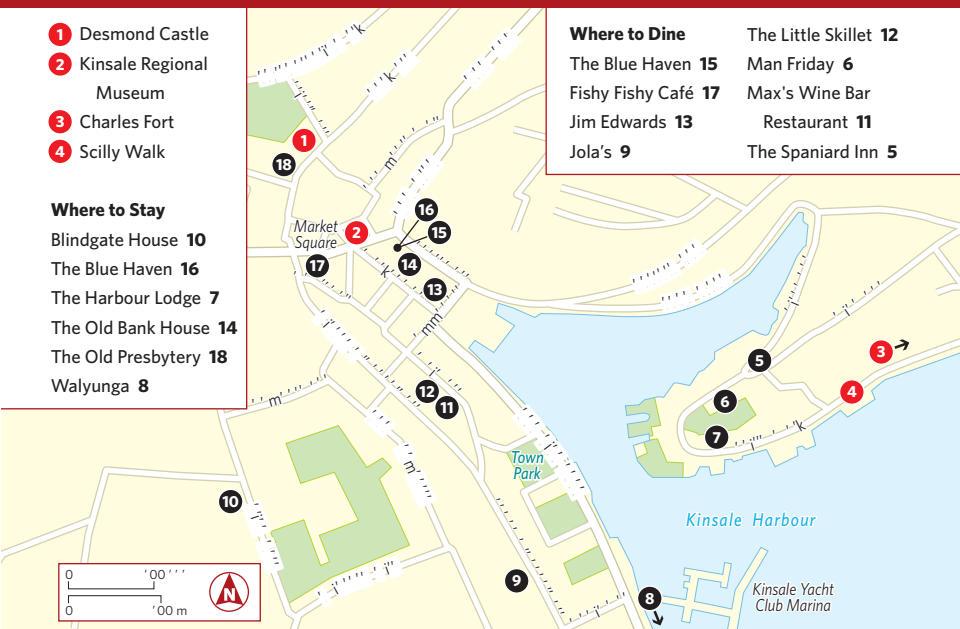
- ❶ Desmond Castle
- ❷ Kinsale Regional Museum
- ❸ Charles Fort
- ❹ Scilly Walk

Where to Stay

- Blindgate House 10
- The Blue Haven 16
- The Harbour Lodge 7
- The Old Bank House 14
- The Old Presbytery 18
- Walyunga 8

Where to Dine

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| The Little Skillet 12 | |
| The Blue Haven 15 | Man Friday 6 |
| Fishy Fishy Café 17 | Max's Wine Bar |
| Jim Edwards 13 | Restaurant 11 |
| Jola's 9 | The Spaniard Inn 5 |



> Colorful Kinsale is a favorite for foodies, art-lovers, shoppers, sailors, and lots of tourists.

History Tip

If you have an hour to spare, consider Don Herily's excellent guided "Historic Strolls" of Kinsale (☎ 021/477-2873; www.historicstrollkinsale.com; €7 adults, €1 children; daily Apr–Oct 11:15am, outside the tourist office).

2 ★ **Kinsale Regional Museum.** With enthusiasm, this small museum in the historic **Market House** (1600) tells the town's story from its earliest days with paintings, photos, and memorabilia highlighting such events as the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 and the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. ⌚ 1 hr. Market Sq., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-7930. Admission €2.50 adults, €1.50 seniors and students, free for kids. Apr–Sept daily 10am–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Fri 11am–1pm and 3–5pm. Closed Jan.

3 ★ **Charles Fort.** Southeast of Kinsale, at the head of the harbor, this coastal landmark dates from the late 17th century. A classic star-shaped fort, it was constructed to prevent foreign naval forces from entering the harbor of Kinsale, then an important trading town. Additions and improvements were made throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and the fort remained garrisoned until 1921. Across the river is James Fort (1602). The complex includes an exhibition center and cafe. ⌚ 30 min. Off the Scilly Walk, Summer Cove, Co. Cork. ☎ 021/477-2263. Tickets €3.70 adults, €2.60 seniors, €1.30 students and kids. Tours available on request. Mid-March to Oct daily 10am–6pm; Nov to mid-March daily 10am–5pm.



**SITE
GUIDE**
PAGE 188

4 ★★ **Scilly Walk.** This sign-posted pedestrian path runs along the sea from Scilly, the community across the harbor from Kinsale, to Charles Fort. If you continue to walk south along the sea from Charles

Fort, you'll find another path that follows the headland to the tip of **Frower Point**, which affords great views across the harbor to the Old Head of Kinsale. The complete walk from Kinsale to Frower Point is 8km (5 miles) each way, and every stretch is rewarding. ⌚ 2 hr. Scilly Tourist Office, Pier Rd., Scilly.



SITE GUIDE

4 Scilly Walk

The official start point for the Scilly Walk is the tourist office on Pier Road in Scilly. We think **A Perryville House** is a more interesting place to begin—sticking out like a big pink sore thumb on Long Quay, with its cotton candy color, Moorish iron verandas, and elaborate, French-style plasterwork above the front door. The hotel owes its dainty mash-up of styles to a 19th-century renovation of a much older building. Pause, admire, and move on. Rounding a hairpin bend and entering Scilly, you'll pass the **B ★ Spaniard Inn** (p 193), one of the area's oldest pubs. Built on the site of a ruined castle in 1650, it is named in honor of a local hero called Don Juan d'Aquila, the commander of a Spanish naval fleet who fought alongside the Irish at the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. Technically a separate village, **C Scilly** is effectively a miniscule suburb of Kinsale but retains a strong sense of its own identity. Pronounced "silly," its unusual name is thought to hark back



to fishermen from the Scilly Isles (off the coast of Cornwall, England) who settled here during the 17th century. Take the right-hand road around the village, skirting along the coast, and join the marked pedestrian trail by the waterside. Along here there are lovely views across to Kinsale, and across the harbor you'll see the stout remains of **D James Fort**. Named for King James I, it was built by the English shortly after the Battle of Kinsale to guard the entrance to the port and ensure against further insurrection. It was captured by the forces of the (Protestant) King William I during his war with the deposed (Catholic) James II in 1690—part of the same conflict that is still commemorated today by the Protestant "Orange marches" in Northern Ireland. Local lore has it that until the 19th century, access to this stretch of water was controlled by a chain floating on timber kegs between the two shores, which could be drawn across the harbor at a moment's notice. Another tiny hamlet on the outskirts of Kinsale, **E Summer Cove** is as sweet a place as its halcyon name

suggests. Black and white toytown houses, with splashes of green and red, face the harbor as gulls circle overhead and the waves froth and bubble along the harbor walls. A short walk uphill from Summer Cove lies **F ★ Charles Fort** (p 188). This impressive military structure was once the site of the medieval Ringcurran Castle, an important defensive position used by the Spanish during the Battle of Kinsale in 1601. After a lengthy fight, the allied Irish and Spanish troops were defeated by the English army, who reduced the castle to rubble. In 1678, a permanent fortress was built here to reinforce the defenses of James Fort. Named, like its counterpart, after the king of the day, Charles Fort remained in use as a barracks until the end of British rule in the early 20th century. It suffered extensive damage during the civil war, and has only recently been restored. The Scilly Walk ends here. If you continue to walk south along the sea, you'll find another path that follows the headland to the tip of **Frower Point**, which affords great views across the harbor to the Old Head of Kinsale.

Where to Stay in Kinsale



> Some rooms overlook the harbor at the Old Bank House.

★ Blindgate House.

This small hotel is like a Zen haven with a soothing sense of style amid the bustle of central Kinsale. This level of design savvy is rare at this price. Guest rooms are spacious and elegant with contemporary dark wood furnishings, natural neutral fabrics, polished wood floors, and serene lighting. Modern conveniences include satellite TV and modem connections. Blindgate, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-7858. www.blindgatehouse.com. 11 units. Double €192–€170. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Dec to mid-Mar.

★★ The Blue Haven.

With a sophisticated design and a friendly attitude, The Blue Haven is all a small inn should be. Rooms are chic with an elegant creamy color scheme. There's a highly rated romantic restaurant here and a sophisticated, relaxing bar. If you want a canopy bed, request a room in the new wing; those rooms also have window seats, armoires, and brass fixtures. 3 Pearse St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2209. www.bluehavenkinsale.com. 17 units. Double €160–€240. AE, MC, V.

★★ The Harbour Lodge.

This Scilly guesthouse has bright, contemporary decor and sweeping water views. Rooms have brass beds, pastel quilts, and modern art. The best five rooms have balconies facing the harbor, and the rest overlook the garden. It's a quieter alternative to in-town hotels, but Kinsale is a 10-minute walk along the harbor. Scilly, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2376. www.harbourlodge.com. 9 units. Double €198–€240. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ The Old Bank House.

This well-restored, waterside Georgian town house is low-key luxurious, with well-chosen antiques and plush, Egyptian cotton towels and bathrobes. Prices are high, but rooms and views are lovely (front rooms overlook the harbor, and the views improve the higher you go). **Tip:** Prices drop nearly by half in the off season. 11 Pearse St. (next to post office), Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-4075. www.oldbankhousekinsale.com. 17 units. Double €160–€195. AE, MC, V.



> *The romance-ready dining room of the Blue Haven.*

★ **Kids The Old Presbytery.**

Owner Noreen McEvoy has an eye for detail and a passion for hospitality. On a calm street, the house has a labyrinth of half-staircases that lend each room a private feel. Rooms have brass and cast-iron beds, old armoires, and other antiques. Two self-catering apartments are perfect for families or friends traveling together. Breakfasts are fabulous. 43 Cork St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2027. www.oldpres.com. 10 units. Double €110–€170; self-catering apartment €180. MC, V.

★ **Walyunga.**

This sweet, modern B&B with ocean views in the countryside is a 5-minute drive from Kinsale. Birds are the noisiest thing around. Guest rooms are nonsmoking and comfortable, with soft bedspreads and neutral tones. The spacious living room is a good place to meet other guests, and breakfasts are great. There's a shared TV in the lounge (none in the rooms). Sandycove, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-4126. www.walyunga.com. 5 units. Double €70–€80. 25% discount for kids 11 & under in room. MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

Kinsale Craft Shopping

Boland's Kinsale Crafts This is a quality shop for made-in-Ireland goods, such as traditional Kinsale smocks, Aran sweaters, pottery, quilts, Irish leather belts, and jewelry. Pearse St., Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-2161.

Crackpots Pottery This shop holds a mix of functional and artistic pottery made by local artists. Some work is done on-site in the workshop; there are also a showroom and a good restaurant. 3 Cork St., Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-2847.

Granny's Bottom Drawer Traditional Irish linens and lace are the ticket here. It's well stocked with tablecloths, pillowcases, Victorian table runners, and hand-crocheted place mats. 53 Main St., Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-4839.

Jagoes Mill Pottery Just over 3km (2 miles) from Kinsale, Irene Gahan Ryle runs a small pottery workshop in an 18th-century mill. Her work has a good balance of practicality and beauty, and it is only sold from the studio workshop and selected galleries. Jagoes Mill, Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-2771.

★★ **Kinsale Crystal** Started in 1991 by a former Waterford crystal master craftsman, this small workshop produces traditional full-lead, mouth-blown, and hand-cut crystal. Visitors are welcome to watch the process and purchase the sparkling results, which are sold nowhere else in Ireland. Market St., Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-4493. www.kinsalecrystal.ie.

Kinsale Silver Kinsale silver traces its origins back more than 300 years. The Dolan family runs this silversmith workshop, where you can watch as each piece is forged by hand, using traditional tools. Pearse St., Kinsale, County Cork. ☎ 021/477-4359. www.kinsalesilver.com.

Where to Dine in Kinsale



➤ *Housed in an 800-year-old building, Max's Wine Bar Restaurant is a familiar face to Kinsale residents.*

★★★ The Blue Haven SEAFOOD

This hotel restaurant is one of Kinsale's most popular, offering something to suit most budgets and appetites. The atmospheric bar serves seafood quiches, seafood pancakes, and oak-smoked salmon. The sky-lit restaurant serves a full menu of fresh seafood, including salmon cooked slowly over oak chips, Irish beef fillet with horseradish dauphinoise, Parmesan crumbed crab claws, and local venison in season. Many wines come from French wineries that were started by Irish exiles. 3 Pearse St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2209. www.bluehavenkinsale.com. Entrees at the bar €10–€20; fixed 3-course dinner €35; dinner entrees €20–€40. AE, MC, V. Bar lunch & dinner daily; restaurant dinner daily.

★★★ Fishy Fishy Café SEAFOOD

This lunch joint has marvelous food and decent

prices. The menu is fresh seafood from local sources (they'll name who caught what), fresh vegetables, farmhouse cheeses, imaginative salads, and homemade breads. The cold dishes are wonderful, but the seafood chowder, grilled John Dory, and tiger prawns with bacon are best. The dozen or so tables are coveted—you can wait about 30 minutes. An early or late lunch beats the rush. Guardwell (next to St. Multoge Church), Kinsale. ☎ 021/470-0415. www.fishyfishy.ie. No reservations. Dishes €16–€22. MC, V. Lunch daily until 4:30pm.

★★ Jim Edwards CONTINENTAL

This classy, nautical gastro pub has a refined menu and convivial atmosphere. Dishes are elegant: boneless duck with cassis and red-currant sauce, rack of lamb, king prawns in light basil-cream sauce, medallions of monkfish with fresh

herbs, steaks, and a range of vegetarian dishes. Market Quay, off Emmet Place, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2541. www.jimewardskinsale.com. Entrees €16–€30. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★★★ **Jola's** EUROPEAN/MO-PO

Our favorite Kinsale restaurant serves classic Irish dishes with a “Mo-Po” accent (that’s modern Polish, a sophisticated trend in Eastern European-inspired cooking). Pierogi and potato pancakes with pork goulash share the menu with more familiar local flavors, such as rack of lamb with basil and walnut pesto. There’s also a decent wine list and a memorable selection of home-flavored vodkas. *Smaczno* (Polish for *bon appétit*)! Lower O’Connell St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-3322. www.jolasrestaurant.com. 3-course early-bird dinner (6–7pm) €26; entrees €22–€27. MC, V. Dinner daily. Closed Sun–Mon Sept–May.

★★ **The Little Skillet** IRISH

This popular spot has a big open hearth and rough stone walls. The kitchen serves up good Irish food with a smattering of international fare—porter and port beef casserole, Kinsale fish hotpot, and local pork and herb sausages. When they’re busy, you wait in the bar across the street, and they call you when your table is ready. (You can even bring your pint back with you.) Warm and friendly, it’s perfect for a chilly day. Main St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-4202. Entrees €18–€20. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Man Friday** SEAFOOD/MODERN IRISH

This huge, incredibly popular restaurant overlooking the harbor is emblematic of Kinsale’s reputation among foodies. The story here begins and ends with seafood, fresh and well prepared; the crab au gratin is delicious, as is the plate of hot oysters with *beurre blanc* sauce. The dining room has seen better days, but the view from the conservatory is gorgeous. Scilly, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2260. www.manfridaykinsale.ie. Entrees €10–€15. MC, V. Dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Max’s Wine Bar Restaurant** MODERN IRISH

For more than 20 years, this old-world town house with outdoor dining has been a local favorite. The fare ranges from light snacks to



> *Max's has a comprehensive wine list.*

full meals—grilled mussels are a specialty. Other dishes include goat-cheese pastas and roast lamb with lavender sauce. Main St., Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2443. Early-bird 3-course dinner (6–7pm) €19; entrees €18–€29. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Wed–Mon. Closed Nov–Feb.

★ **The Spaniard Inn** BISTRO

High on Compass Hill overlooking the harbor, this congenial pub has whitewashed walls and a thatched roof. It’s named for Don Juan de Aguila, who attempted (unsuccessfully) to rally his Spanish fleet to defeat the British in the Battle of Kinsale. The food is upmarket pub grub: burgers, steaks, pasta, seafood, and excellent chowder. Local fishermen, sailors, and professionals mingle to hear live music nightly in the summer and on weekends year-round, with jazz-blues Sundays at 5pm. Scilly, Kinsale. ☎ 021/477-2436. www.thespaniard.ie. Entrees €8–€25. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

County Cork for Foodies

County Cork has experienced a culinary renaissance over the last couple of decades, and the region is now an essential destination for gourmet travelers. Myrtle and Darina Allen have been a driving force in this evolution, as advocates of Irish country house cuisine, and for decades they have drawn ardent foodies from all over the world to Ballymaloe—both the Middleton inn and the cooking school in Shanagarry. Farther south along the coast, the tiny harbor town of Kinsale must have one of the highest ratios of outstanding restaurants to residents in the world. And Cork city lays claim to Ireland's most enduring food-related institution—the Old English Market, from 1610.

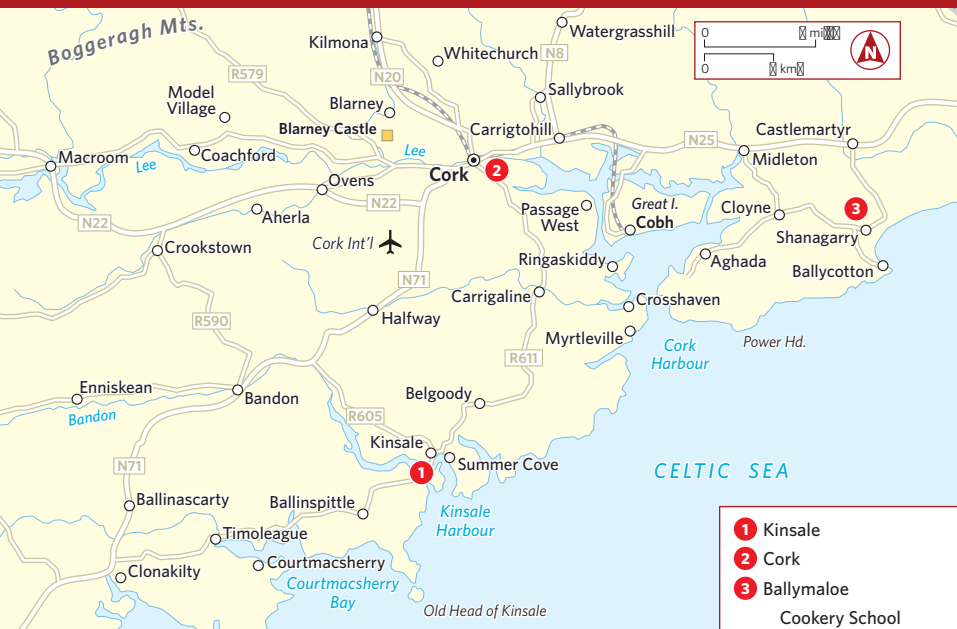


> *Students at Ballymaloe Cookery School learn the importance of mise en place in the kitchen.*

START Kinsale is on the R600. **TRIP LENGTH** 66km (41 miles).

1 ★★★ **Kinsale.** The best place in Ireland for a midday meal is the **Fishy Fishy Café**

(☎ 021/470-0415; www.fishyfishy.ie), next to St. Multoge Church in the center of town. They don't take bookings and they're open only for lunch, so you'll just have to turn up and try your luck. Wondrous things come to those with a



little patience. **Max's Wine Bar Restaurant** (Main St.; ☎ 021/477-2443) and **Man Friday** (Scilly; ☎ 021/477-2260) are among the most consistently popular old-guard establishments amid Kinsale's restaurant scene, although neither commands the loyal following built up by **The Blue Haven** (☎ 021/477-2209; www.bluehavenkinsale.com) on Pearse Street. Kinsale also affords a host of less formal dining options, from gastro-pubs to bistros and informal hang-outs where you can relax with a prime steak or plate of seafood. Chief among them is **Jim Edwards** (Market Quay, ☎ 021/477-2541); other standouts include **The Little Skillet** (Main St.; ☎ 021/477-4202) and **The Spaniard Inn** (Scilly; ☎ 021/477-2436). Of course, new restaurants open up in Kinsale all the time, and sometimes the pace of change seems so rapid that it's hard to keep up. Every time we go, there seems to be another hot new place in town. For our money, the best and most interesting of these new arrivals is **Jola's** (☎ 021/477-3322; www.jolasrestaurant.com). Its sophisticated, Eastern European-inspired menu has introduced us to a new word: Mo-Po—Modern Polish, served with house-made vodkas. ⌚ 2 days. For more on Kinsale, see p 186.

Take the R607 north to Belgooly. Turn left onto the R600 north until it becomes the N27, which leads to the center of Cork. 27km (17 miles).

Kinsale Gourmet Festival

Foodies from all over Ireland—and even farther afield—descend on Kinsale in October, when the Kinsale Gourmet Festival takes over town for 4 days. The event's calendar changes every year, but there are always a couple of cooking demonstrations; and restaurants join in the fun by hosting parties, special tastings, “meet the chef” events, and so on. Many activities are free, although some of the bigger events and banquets charge about €20 to €100 per ticket. Highlights might include an exotic tea tasting and a French market, a cheese and Prosecco party thrown by a local hotel, and an all-day, Alice in Wonderland-themed food-and-wine tour (a rather inebriant affair, definitely aimed at grownups). It's magnificent, bacchanalian fun. Learn more and book tickets at www.kinsalerestaurants.com.



> Salmon canapés at Ballymaloe Cookery School, where Irish country house goes gourmet.



**SITE
GUIDE**
PAGE 197

2 ★★ Cork. Ireland's best food emporium, the **Old English Market** (Grand Parade, Oliver Plunkett St.; Mon–Sat 9am–6pm), dates from a charter of King James I in 1610.

The present building, finished in 1786, was damaged by fire in 1980 and then brilliantly refurbished. Inside, food stands brim with impeccably fresh meats, fish, vegetables, and fruit from all over Ireland. Traditional Cork specialties include hot buttered eggs, tripe, *crubeens* (pigs' feet), and *drisheens* (blood sausage). The market's name is a holdover from English rule, when Irish shoppers were denied entry. Another Irish take on an English creation, **stout** (*leann dubh*, or "black ale"—a stronger variation on English porter), is associated with Cork. Dublin's Guinness brand has dominated the market both at home and abroad. Walk into any pub and order a "home and away," and you'll get a pint of Guinness and one of either Beamish or Murphy's (even though both are now owned by Heineken). ☹ 1 day.

Leave Cork on the N25 east. At Castlemartyr, turn right onto the R632. The Ballymaloe Cookery School is just north of Shanagarry. 39km (24 miles).

3 ★★ Ballymaloe Cookery School (Shanagarry). Professional and amateur cooks flock to Shanagarry from all over the world to sit near the whisk of Darina Allen at Ballymaloe, on the grounds of a 41-hectare (101-acre) organic farm outside a small fishing village in East Cork. It

Where to Stay & Dine

In Cork City, see p 180; in Kinsale, see p 190; in East Cork, see p 210; in West Cork, see p 217.

all started with Darina's mother-in-law, Myrtle, whose evangelization of Ireland's bounty of fresh produce at **Ballymaloe House** restaurant and inn (see "Where to Stay & Dine in East Cork," p 210) elevated Irish "country house" cooking to gourmet status. The Allen family's success led to the founding of this cooking school, which offers dozens of courses ranging in length from a half-day to 12 weeks. Topics include bread making, tapas, sushi, vegetarian cuisine, family food, barbecue, and holiday cooking. Prices start at around €100 and rise to the stratosphere. The beautiful, extensive **gardens** at Ballymaloe are open to visitors from April to October (admission €6 adults; family discounts available). The **Garden Café** serves morning coffee, memorable light lunches, and afternoon tea from Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 6pm. The complex also functions as an inn, with 33 guest rooms available. ☹ Half-day minimum. Kinoith, Shanagarry. ☎ 021/464-6785. www.cookingisfun.ie. Half-day courses €105, 1- to 5-day courses €175–€835. Accommodations for students in self-catering cottages €28 sharing, €45 single per night extra. Open year-round; schedule varies.

To return to Cork, retrace the route back up the R632/N25.



SITE GUIDE

2 Stout & About

The future of Cork's brewing culture may rest with small, independent microbreweries now that Heineken owns both of Cork's oldest stout labels: After buying out **Murphy's** in 1983 and renaming it Heineken Ireland in 2001, they snatched up **Beamish & Crawford** too in 2009, closing the 220 year-old plant, relocating production across town, and discontinuing tours. But

A Franciscan Well Brewery (North Mall, Cork; ☎ 021/421-0130), launched in 1998 on the site of an old 13th-century monastery, still roasts their malt barley before brewing begins—the step that distinguishes stout from other ales. They don't offer tours of the brew house, but you can sit in the flagstoned outdoor courtyard and look right into the brewing operation while you down your pint. Plenty of Cork pubs still consider it a matter of civic pride to pull an exceptional pint of the local brew, even if Germans are making it now. With indoor and outdoor seating and live music,

B The Bierhaus, Pope's Quay (☎ 021/455-1648; www.thebierhauscork.com) serves a range of stouts among its selection of 70 beers. From 1824, **C Clancy's Bar**, 15-16 Princes St. (☎ 021-427-6097; www.clancys-bar.com) is one of the city's oldest pubs, and they serve a good steak



too. **D Sober Lane**, Sullivan's Quay (☎ 021/467-7217; www.soberlane.com) has a beer garden and keeps 14 brews on draft, including stouts of course. Though they serve pizzas, "serving a good pint and having the craic is [their] priority," with live music most nights. Across the street from the former Beamish facility, you can toast the kitschy old mock-Tudor landmark at **E An Spailpin Fanac** (28-29 S. Main St.; ☎ 021/421-0130), a lovely 18th-century pub with low-beamed ceilings, flagstone floors, and open fireplaces, where traditional Irish music is played live most nights. One of the most popular pubs in town, **F Courthouse Tavern** on Hanover St. (☎ 21/427-1506) is small and simple, but live music and perfect pours reel in the crowds.



THE IRISH ARE among the world's most storied drinkers. Alcohol seems to suit the people's tendency toward mirth, mayhem, and melancholy. The pub is the social center in a society that has only a mild interest in moviegoing and no interest whatsoever in bowling. They prefer to meet in the local pub to drink stout and shout.



GUINNESS Ireland's world-famous black beer is actually ruby-colored, made from roasted barley. With its creamy head, "there's both eating and drinking in it," but

it has fewer calories than orange juice. Founded by Arthur Guinness in 1759, it's now owned by Heineken but remains deeply associated with Ireland.

WHISKEY One of the earliest distilled beverages in Europe, "whiskey" came straight from the Irish word for water, *uisce*. The oldest whiskey distillery in the world is

in Bushmills in Antrim, from 1608. Like Scotch, Irish whiskey is made primarily from barley, but it is distilled three times, and no peat is used in the process. It is never mixed with ice; instead, a drop of water is added to open its flavors. It is commonly mixed with that other Irish idiosyncrasy—red lemonade.

"WINEGEESE" After the Battle of the Boyne

in 1690, thousands of Irish soldiers fled Protestant English rule to serve in foreign armies. Some departed on wine-smuggling ships bound for France, where they eventually became vintners. Richard Hennessy is the most famous of these "Winegeese" as sire of the world's preeminent Cognac label, founded in 1765. But in Bordeaux alone,



DEVIL FOR THE DRINK

BY CHARLIE O'MALLEY

The Drunken Truth



- > The Irish spend three times more on alcohol than any other nation in Europe.
- > Happy hour is actually banned in the Republic.
- > Ireland has one of the highest teetotaler memberships in the world.
- > The oldest whiskey distillery in the world is Bushmills in Antrim, which dates from 1608.
- > Utilizing nearly 5% of Ireland's milk production, Bailey's Irish Cream is the number one-selling liqueur in the world, with 6.6 million cases sold in a year in 130 countries.

Lynch-Bages and Chateau Clarke vineyards, now owned by Baron Philippe de Rothschild, also descend from this first wave of Irish winemakers. Eventually others ventured to Australia, Chile, and South Africa to plant vineyards.

POTCHEEN

Potcheen is a potent, 90-proof Irish liquor made from malted barley grain or potatoes. The English banned it in the 1600s, but for 300 years it was brewed in secret, which made it popular among nationalists, poets,

and writers. The first film made in the Irish language was about potcheen brewers. In 1997 potcheen was legalized, but many aficionados still prefer to buy it clandestinely. Used as a top-up for weddings and wakes,



it is still infamous for inducing madness or blindness and makes an excellent substitute for dynamite.

County Cork with Kids

The wee ones love one of Ireland's most famous landmarks, Blarney Castle—where kissing the so-called Blarney Stone guarantees a lifetime of eloquence, according to legend. For grown-ups, the place is about as twee and touristy as it gets, but try to tear your kids away once they spot the guys in uniform dangling visitors upside down over a parapet to kiss a rock. A few miles east of Cork City, the Fota Island Wildlife Park & Arboretum is an excellent zoo where visitors can walk freely among many of the exotic residents. Outside the village of Liscarroll, the Donkey Sanctuary is poignantly delightful.

START Carrigtwohill is signposted off the N25.

TRIP LENGTH 72km (44 miles).

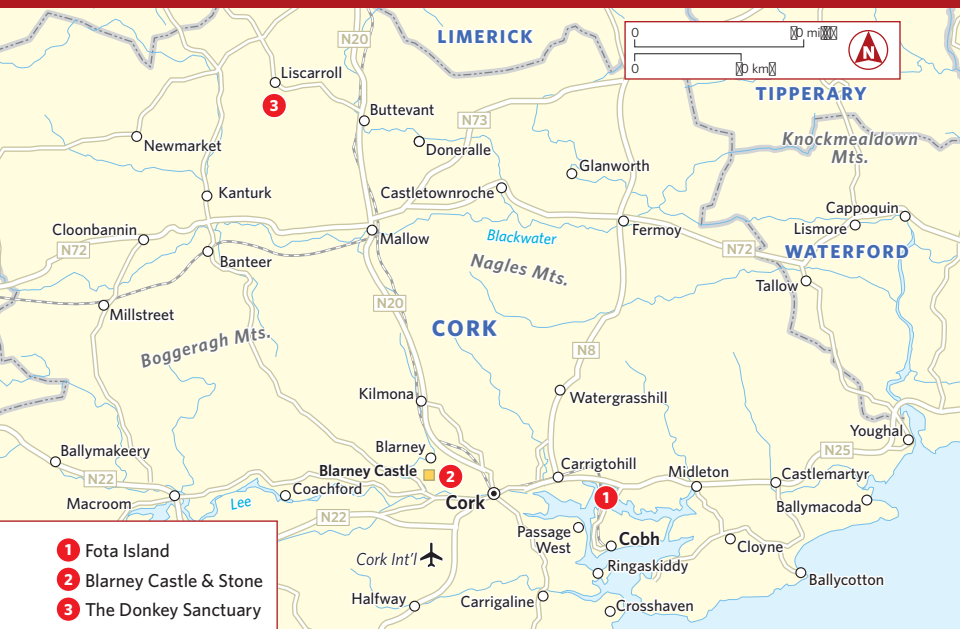
1 ★★★ Fota Island. If only all zoos were designed like the **Fota Wildlife Park**. Most of the animals at this thoughtfully designed park are free to roam without any apparent barriers, mingling with each other and human visitors. Kangaroos, macaws, and lemurs have the run of 16 hectares (40 acres) of grassland; only the cheetahs are behind conventional fencing. If close contact with a menagerie of exotic creatures doesn't amuse the kids, try the small amusement park, tour train, picnic area, or gift shop on-site. ☉ 3 hr. Fota Island, Carrigtwohill. ☎ 021/481-2678. www.fotawildlife.ie. Tickets

€13.50 adults; €9 seniors, students, and kids; €54 families. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 11am–6pm. 16km/10 miles east of Cork on Cobh Rd.

Take the N25 and N8 toward Cork. At Water St., outside the city center, the N8 splits; bear left and continue along the river. Continue as the road becomes Pope's Quay. Then turn right down Shandon St. and immediately left into Blarney St., which becomes Blarney Rd. At Clogheen, bear right at the fork, up Faggot Hill. Follow signs for Blarney Castle. 24km (15 miles).

> Kids might like to see Blarney Castle's Badger Cave and underground dungeons.





Where to Stay & Dine

In Cork City, see p 180; in Kinsale, see p 190; in East Cork, see p 210; in West Cork, see p 217.



> *Lemurs are some the fun furry critters that roam Fota Wildlife Park.*

2 Blarney Castle & Stone (Blarney). The super-touristy Blarney Castle and Stone leave us cold, but we remember what it was like to be 10 years old—the optimum age to bend over backward, hang upside down over a parapet, and kiss a big rock in hope of acquiring the gift of the gab. ⌚ 2 hr. For details see p 179.

Out of Blarney, take the north road, which merges with the N20 just after Lower Kilmona. At Buttevant turn left onto the R522, which becomes the R578. Turn left at Mountcorbett and follow this road to Liscarroll. 48km (30 miles).

3 ★ The Donkey Sanctuary (Liscarroll). A real heartbreaker, this one: a charity that rescues abandoned and abused donkeys and nurses them back to health. A few of the beasts of burden here have been voluntarily relinquished by owners who are no longer able to care for them, but the majority have sadder histories. The donkeys live out their days at this quiet and bucolic place, where they receive medical aid and plenty of TLC. Visitors can meet the gentle patients and learn their stories. The emphasis is on happy endings. Seeing these animals given a new lease on life can be a touching and even quite profound experience for kids. ⌚ 1 hr. Liscarroll, Mallow. ☎ 022/48398. www.thedonkeysanctuary.ie. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm; Sat–Sun 10am–5pm. About 500m (1,640 ft.) up the road, beside Liscarroll Castle.

To get to Cork from Liscarroll, backtrack to the N20 south. 56.6 (31 miles).

County Cork Outdoors

The brawny, verdant Cork countryside is a place of natural beauty, yet many of its loveliest sites are little-known outside Ireland. Gougane Barra, for instance, is a lake and forest park as breathtaking as the far more famous Killarney Lakes (p 238) or Innisfree (p 374). The deserted village of Cummingeera makes an eerily graceful end to a walk through the low sandstone peaks of the Caha Mountains. And our favorite outdoor spot in County Cork is the craggy inlets and sweeping, golden hills of Cape Clear Island, one of Ireland's best hiking locations.

START **Gougane Barra** (approx. 2.3km/1.4 miles west of Garrynapeaka on the Macroom-Glengarriff road). **TRIP LENGTH** 197.5km (122.7 miles).

1 ★★ Gougane Barra (Macroom). One of Ireland's most beautiful spots, Gougane Barra (which means "St. Fin Barre's Cleft") is the name of both a tiny old settlement and a forest park a little northeast of the Pass of Keimaneigh, 24km (15 miles) northeast of Bantry off T64 (also well signposted on the Macroom-Glengarriff rd.) Its most beautiful feature is a still, dark, romantic lake, which is the source of the River Lee. This is where St. Fin Barre founded a monastery, supposedly on

the small island connected by a causeway to the mainland. Though nothing remains of the saint's 6th-century community, the setting is idyllic, with rhododendrons spilling into the still waters where swans glide by. The island now holds an elfin chapel and eight small circular cells dating from the early 1700s, as well as a modern chapel. There are signposted walks and drives through the wooded hills, although you have to pay a small admission charge per car to enter the park. ⌚ 3 hr. Macroom-Glengarriff rd. www.gougane.cork2020.com.

Take the R584 south. After Ardnacloghy, join the N71 northeast to Glengarriff. Turn left onto the R572. Continue down the coast.

> *The Baltimore Beacon in West Cork.*





Join the R574 to Derreen, and turn left on the R571. Follow the signs as described below to Lauragh. 60km (37 miles).

2 ★ Cummingeera. Stark and eerie, Cummingeera is an abandoned village near Lauragh at the base of a cliff in a wild, remote valley. The walk to the village gives you a taste for the rough beauty of the Caha Mountains and a sense of the extent to which people in pre-famine Ireland would go to find a patch of arable land. To get to the start of the walk, take the road posted for Glanmore Lake south from R571; the road is just over 1km (¾ mile) west of the turnoff for Healy Pass. Follow the Glanmore Lake road 1km (¾ mile), then turn right at the road posted for “stone circle.” Continue 2km (1¼ miles) to the point at which the road becomes dirt, and park on the roadside. From here, there is no trail—just walk up the valley to its terminus, about 2km (1¼ miles) away, where the ruins of a village hug the cliff’s base. Where the valley is blocked by a headland, take



➤ Moss carpets the forest floor of Gougane Barra, the site of St. Fin Barre’s 6th-century monastery.

Where to Stay & Dine

In Cork City, see p 180; in Kinsale, see p 190; in East Cork, see p 210; in West Cork, see p 217.



> If you can ignore the trailer park next door, Barleycove Beach affords pristine views.

the route around to the left, which is less steep. Return the way you came; the whole walk—4km (2½ miles)—is of moderate difficulty. ☉ 2 hr.

Backtrack to Glengarriff and head south on the N71. Turn right onto the R591 shortly after Dunbittern. Continue to Goleen. Then follow signs for Barleycove. 80km (50 miles).

3 ★ Barleycove Beach. A vast expanse of pristine sand, Barleycove Beach has fine views out toward the Mizen Head cliffs. Despite the trailer park and holiday homes on the far side of the dunes, large parts of the beach never seem to get crowded. Take R591 to Goleen and follow signs for Mizen Head. There is a public parking lot at the Barleycove Hotel. ☉ 1 hr.

Backtrack up the R591 for 6km (3¾ miles) and turn right onto the R592, after Ballyrisode. Continue to Ballydehob and join the N71 east. Turn off at Skibbereen and take the R595 (Market St./Baltimore Rd.) south toward Baltimore. Follow signs for Lough Ine. 47km (29 miles).

4 ★★ Lough Ine. Connected to the sea by a narrow isthmus, this lake is in a lush valley of exceptional beauty. It's also the starting point to one of West Cork's most beautiful coastal walks. To get there, follow signs for Lough Ine along R595 between Skibbereen and Baltimore; there is a parking lot at the northwest corner of the lake. The wide trail proceeds gradually upward from the parking lot through the woods on the west slope of the valley, with several viewpoints toward the lake and the sea beyond.

The Sheep's Head Way

Voted "Best Walk in Ireland" by *Country Walking* magazine, the Sheep's Head Way makes an 89km (55-mile) loop along coastal cliffs and rugged hills from Bantry to Fionn McCools Seat, Kilcrohane, Durrus, and back, incorporating numerous smaller loops traversible in a day. The *Guide to the Sheep's Head Way*, available in most local stores and tourist offices, combines history, poetry, and topography in a fantastic introduction to the region. It is a rough place, and you won't find many tourists in its more remote reaches.

Once you reach the hilltop, there is a sweeping view of the coast from Mizen Head to Galley Head. ☉ 1½ hr.

Rejoin the R595 and head south to Baltimore. From here catch a car ferry to Cape Clear Island. 11km (6½ miles) approx.

5 ★★ Cape Clear Island. The southernmost inhabited point in Ireland, 13km (8 miles) off the mainland, has a permanent population of a hundred residents. It can be bleak, with a craggy coastline and no trees to break the rush of sea wind, but its barrenness is starkly beautiful—rough and irregular, but not without grace. In early summer, wildflowers brighten the landscape, and in October, passerine migrants, some on their way from North America and Siberia, fill the air. Seabirds are abundant



> *The Galley Head Lightkeeper's House is an Irish Landmark Trust property, available for rent.*

during the nesting season, especially from July to September. At any time, Cape Clear is unforgettable. It should come as no surprise that this is prime hiking territory, but there's a lot more to do besides walk and sightsee.

Cléire Lasmuigh, Cape Clear Island Adventure Centre (☎ 028/39198), runs outdoor programs from snorkeling and sea kayaking to hill walking and orienteering. Coastal cruises—for sea angling, scuba diving, or bird-watching—are the specialty of **Ciarán O'Driscoll** (☎ 028/39153).

Harpercraft and the **Back Room in Cotter's Yard**, North Harbour, sell local art, crafts, and books, including Chuck Kruger's *Cape Clear Island Magic* (there's no better introduction to the wonder of this place). Modest hostel, B&B, and self-catering accommodations are available on Cape Clear Island by the day, week, or month. The **An Óige Youth Hostel** (☎ 028/39198) at the Cape Clear Adventure Centre is open March through October. Most B&Bs are open year-round. They include **Fáilte** (contact Eileanóir Uí Drisceoil, ☎ 028/39153) and **Ard na Gaoith** (contact Eileen Leonard, ☎ 028/39160). For self-catering cottages by the day or week, contact **Ciarán O'Driscoll** (☎ 028/39153). You can't miss the town's three pubs and two restaurants, which will keep you well fortified, and the fruit scones baked

at **Cistin Chléire** on North Harbour are fabulous. Ferry crossings to Cape Clear leave from Baltimore Harbour and Schull, and take around 45 minutes. ⌚ 1 day at least. From Baltimore: Cape Clear Island Ferry Service (☎ 028/39135 or 086/282-4008; www.capeclearferry.com). Two return crossings daily (more in high season); call ahead for departure times. From Schull: Karycraft (☎ 028/28278). Three return crossings daily June, July, and Aug; once daily Sept; call ahead for departure times. Tickets for either service €12 adults, €6.50 kids. For more information see the Cape Clear website (www.oilean-chleire.ie/english/).

Once Upon a Time, There Was a Little Island in the Sea . . .

Cape Clear Island comes alive the first week in September during the annual **Cape Clear Island International Storytelling Festival**. Established in 1994, this small but spirited event attracts traditional musicians and storytellers from all over Ireland and beyond. Guests at the 2008 festival included storytellers of Native American and British-Punjabi heritage and a host of skilled performers from closer to home. See www.capeclearstorytelling.com for more details.

East County Cork

For anyone with an Irish surname and a passing knowledge of their family history, the name Queenstown likely sounds familiar. These days it's called Cobh (pronounced cove, meaning "haven" in Irish), but otherwise time has not altered the significance of this unassuming coastal town to the bittersweet history of the Irish diaspora. This was once Ireland's chief port of emigration; during the early-20th-century famine, three or four transatlantic liners called each week. It was also the last port of call for the Belfast-built *RMS Titanic* before it sank in April 1912. Barryscourt Castle, one of the best-preserved medieval castles in this part of Ireland, is also nearby.



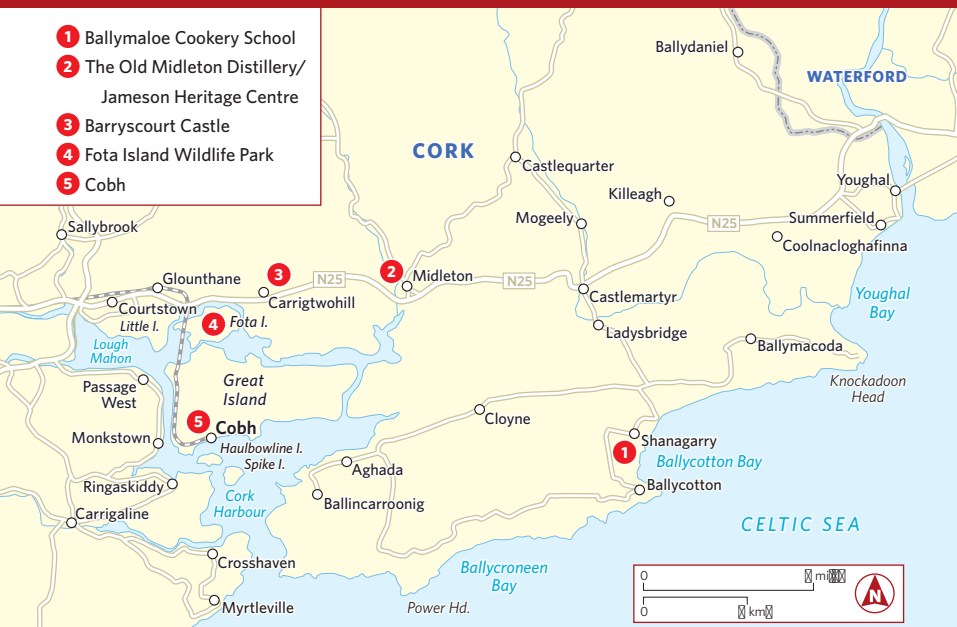
> The herbs at Ballymaloe Cookery School are for student use, but anyone can pay to visit the gardens from April to October.

START Shanagarry, off the R632. TRIP LENGTH 17km (11 miles).

① ★★ **Ballymaloe Cookery School (Shanagarry).** Darina Allen's world-famous cooking school, amid a 40-hectare (100-acre) organic farm, runs short-term courses that range from half-days to several weeks, covering topics such as bread making, tapas, vegetarian cuisine, and barbecue. The beautiful, extensive ★ **gardens** on the grounds are open to visitors from April to October (admission is €6 adults; family discounts are available). The student-run **Garden Café**, open Wednesday to

Sunday 11am to 6pm, serves morning coffee, memorable light lunches, and afternoon tea. For more information see p 196. ☹ Half-day. Kinoith, Shanagarry. ☎ 021/464-6785. www.cookingisfun.ie. Half-day courses €105, 1- to 5-day courses €175–€835. Accommodations for students in self-catering cottages €28 sharing, €45 single per night extra. Open year-round; schedule varies.

From Shanagarry, take the R532 north to Castlemartyr. Then turn left onto the N25. Follow signs for Midleton and the Jameson Distillery. 19km (12 miles).



> *Treat yourself to a tipple of authentic Irish whiskey after a tour of Jameson's Old Midleton Distillery.*

2 ★ The Old Midleton Distillery/Jameson Heritage Centre (Midleton). In a brightly colored building with a huge copper vat shining out front, this distillery and visitor center are a sort of Willy Wonka factory of booze. Production takes place in a modern factory now, but the original 1825 structures are meticulously preserved. The visitor center shows a film and runs a whiskey-making demonstration followed by a tasting after the tour. ⌚ 1 hr. Distillery Rd., off Main St., Midleton. ☎ 021/461-3594. www.jamesonwhiskey.com. Tickets €13 adults, €9 seniors, €9.50 kids. Daily 10am–6pm. Tours on request; last tour at 5pm.

Take the N25 west toward Cork. At Barryscourt follow signs to Carrigtwohill and Barryscourt Castle. 7.7km (4¾ miles).

3 ★ Barryscourt Castle (Carrigtwohill). This good example of a tower house-style castle was built in the 16th century on a site known to have been occupied long before that. There are records of a windmill here in the 7th century and, after that, some form of defensive fort—possibly another castle. Barryscourt was the historical seat of the Anglo-Norman de Barry family, who found themselves on the wrong side of a rebellion in the 1570s. When English troops were sent to extract revenge, the de



> *The real whiskey making now happens in a modern factory, but an old copper vat still looks nice outside the Old Middleton Distillery.*

Barrys destroyed the castle themselves. Pardoned by Queen Elizabeth I, the family later rebuilt the castle, adding the bawn (outer defensive wall) and towers. The castle was badly damaged and finally abandoned in 1645, during the Eleven Years' War (the precursor to Oliver Cromwell's destructive incursion into Ireland). Today, it has been extensively restored; you can

tour the main tower, furnished in the 16th-century style, and there's a replanted herb garden down by the bawn. There's also an exhibition and tearoom. ☉ 1 hr. Carrigtwohill. ☎ 021/488-2218. www.heritageireland.ie. Free admission. June–Sept daily 10am–6pm.

Return to Carrigtwohill center on the N25 and follow signs for Fota Island. 5km (3 miles).

4 ★★ Kids Fota Island Wildlife Park. Wherever possible, the animals in this park roam free with no obvious barriers, mixing and mingling with other species and sometimes with human visitors. Only the cheetahs are behind conventional fencing. As with most zoos, it has got its share of rare and endangered zebras, ostriches, antelopes, and the like. Kangaroos, macaws, and lemurs roam over 16 hectares (40 acres) of grassland. Fota Island is also home to the **Fota House, Arboretum & Gardens**—a plantation-like estate with a grand house built in 1820, and sprawling botanical gardens with exotic trees and plants from temperate regions around the

Titanic Tours

As the last port of call for the *Titanic*, Cobh (then Queenstown) has sprung up a mini-industry for devotees of that ill-fated vessel. This walking tour takes in a variety of related sites in context of Cobh's maritime and emigrant history. Some of the *Titanic* connections seem tenuous, but fans will love it. Others can look forward to a free glass of Guinness at the end. ☉ 1 hr. 15 min. Tours leave from Commodore Hotel, 4 Westbourne Place, Cobh. €9.50 adults; €4.75 kids 11 & under. Apr–Sept daily 11am.



> *Cobh's Victorian rail station houses a genealogical service to help visitors trace their Irish ancestors.*



> *The Queenstown Story tells the tale of the many ill-fated Irish emigrants who bade goodbye to their homeland from Cobh.*

world. A coffee shop, a small amusement park for young children, a tour train, picnic tables, and a gift shop are on the grounds. ☉ 3 hr. Fota Island, Carrigtwohill. ☎ 021/481-2678. www.fotawildlife.ie. Tickets wildlife park €13.50 adults; €9 seniors, students, and kids. Fota House & Gardens €6 adults, €3 kids. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm; Sun 11am-6pm; Fota House open Apr-Oct only. 16km/10 miles east of Cork on Cobh Rd.

Take the R624 south and follow this road to Cobh. 11km (6¾ miles).

5 ★★ Cobh. In the mid-1800s, more than 2.5 million people fled Ireland from Cobh, then known as Queenstown, for new lives in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. **The Queenstown Story** (Cobh Railway Station; ☎ 021/481-3591; www.cobhheritage.com; €7.10 adults; €6 seniors and students; €3 kids 8-12) intelligently commemorates Cobh's heartbreaking history as the last port of call for emigrants—many doomed to convict ships to Australia, coffin ships to America, and transatlantic liners such as the ill-fated

Titanic and Lusitania. In a beautifully restored Victorian railway station, this heritage center tells the story of the city, its harbor, and the Irish exodus in a series of displays, films, and exhibits. The center also houses a restaurant, shop, and genealogical referral service. Defining the Cobh skyline, **St. Colman's Cathedral** (☎ 021/813-222) is an excellent example of neo-Gothic church architecture. Started in 1868, the cathedral was the country's most expensive religious building of its time. It took 47 years to complete. The largest of its 47 bells weighs 3.5 tons. The organ has nearly 2,500 pipes. The interior is vast and ornate, with a beautiful arcaded nave and precipitously high chancel arch. It's a working church, but visitors are welcome outside service times. It is also a popular venue for concerts and recitals. A short walk from St. Colman's Cathedral, the **Lusitania Memorial** (Casement Sq.) commemorates the British passenger liner sunk by a German U-boat May 7, 1915, killing 1,198 passengers, including several victims buried in Cobh cemetery. For more information see www.visitcobh.com.

Where to Stay & Dine in East Cork



> *Bayview Hotel is aptly named and superbly situated.*

★★ **Aherne's Townhouse & Restaurant**

YOUGHAL SEAFOOD This cozy restaurant with rooms serves first-rate seafood. Guest quarters are large, comfortable, and stylish. Most are more like hotel suites than rooms—each with king-size beds, antiques, and designer fabrics. But the draw is the French-influenced cuisine, which makes the most of local blackwater salmon, giant prawn tails, rock oysters, and lobsters. Even the bar food—seafood pies, chowders, crab sandwiches, and salads—is worth a detour, and delicious breakfasts are served in front of the fire. 163 N. Main St., Youghal. ☎ 024/92424. www.ahernes.com. 12 units. Double €150–€280. Bar lunch from €10; dinner entrees €25–€34. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Ballymaloe House** **SHANAGARRY FRENCH COUNTRY HOUSE** With its Georgian farmhouse facade and 14th-century castle tower, this ivy-covered, family-run enclave of hospitality is on a working organic farm, complete with grazing sheep and cows. Guest rooms are informal and

comfortable, verging on rustic, but the main attraction is the dining room—a pioneer of Ireland's "country house" culinary style. French-inspired, it relies on local seafood and produce, accompanied by fresh vegetables from the garden. The kitchen's success has spawned an acclaimed **cooking school** (p 196), a shelf of Allen family cookbooks, and, some would say, a culinary rebirth in Ireland. **Shanagarry, Middleton.** ☎ 021/465-2531. www.ballymaloe.ie. 33 units. Double €220–€320. Dinner averages €60. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **kids Barnabrow Country House** **MIDDLETON** Geraldine O'Brien has created an original, stylish, family-friendly inn amid the rolling hills of East Cork. Guest rooms in the main house and in stone buildings off the courtyard are large and comfortable. Cots, cribs, babysitters, and special children's menus are available. Kids are safe to roam freely, and there are plenty of tame animals to meet and pet—donkeys, ducks, hens, geese, sheep, goats—plus a playground.

Note: They're marketing themselves more as a wedding venue than a hotel these days, so we strongly suggest that you book far in advance, especially for a weekend stay. Cloyne, Midleton.

☎ 021/ 465-2534. www.barnabrowhouse.ie. 19 units. Double €130–€180. AE, MC, V.

★ **Bayview Hotel BALLYCOTTON**

This seaside hotel, owned by John and Cernel O'Brien, overlooks miles of spectacular coastline stretching out from Ballycotton Harbour. All the rooms in this former manor house have sea views. They're bright and airy with modern furnishings and subtle, chocolate-and-cream tones.

Capricho is one of the best and most imaginative restaurants in the area. Typical dishes include local salmon with mustard and champagne sauce, or maple and vanilla roast pork with parsnip and apple purée and white turnip gratin. Elaborate desserts include the "Rebel Yell," an iced Southern Comfort parfait with caramelized orange and cocoa sorbet. Ballycotton. ☎ 021/464-6746. www.thebayviewhotel.com. 35 units. Double €100–€220. Entrees €28–€33. AE, MC, V.

★ **Harty's Restaurant CLOYNE CONTINENTAL**

In the medieval village of Cloyne, Harty's is one of the best little restaurants you could hope to happen upon. Owner/chef Eamon Harty draws on the freshest vegetables, ripest fruits, and highest-quality meats and fish, then knows exactly what to do with them. Cloyne, near Midleton. ☎ 021/465-2401. Entrees €16–€23. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Myrtleville Oceanside Retreat**

This timbered retreat—a curiosity in Ireland, where most cottages are built of stone—is right on the sea, with stunning views from the wrap-around deck and living room. Convenient to Cork City, Kinsale, golfing, yachting, deep-sea fishing, and a sandy beach, it's on a small country road, facing the Atlantic at precisely the spot where Victor Hugo worked on *Les Misérables*. Accommodations are self-catering, kitchen appliances are new, and the decor is graciously inviting. It sleeps six people comfortably. Contact Elegant Ireland ☎ 01/475-1632. www.elegant.ie. 3 double bedrooms (1 with king-size bed, 2 with queen-size). €1,800–€2,500 per week, including utilities. MC, V.



> TOP TO BOTTOM The kitchen at Barnabrow Country House; poached pear and chocolate sauce at Ballymaloe House; Aherne's Townhouse & Restaurant.

West County Cork

West Cork shares the photo-friendly craggy topography and jagged coastline of neighboring County Kerry, but it's not as crowded with tourists. It's still impossible to make good time on the roads here, as they tend to be narrow and sinuous, twisting along rivers, through valleys and villages, and around mountains. Those willing to slow down and go with the flow will probably come across at least one puzzling rural intersection without signs, or have to wait while a herd of sheep slowly makes its way down a country path. In places, the public route that hugs the coast narrows to just one lane but delivers heart-stopping views.



> *The old signal station at Mizen Head is now a visitor center, accessible to the brave by suspension bridge.*

START Cahermore for the coast road, then cable car crossing to Dursey Island.

TOTAL TRIP LENGTH 226km (140 miles).

1 ★ Dursey Island. A barren promontory extending into the sea at the tip of the Beara Peninsula, Dursey Island has no amenities but offers beautiful seaside walks and a memorable passage from the mainland via cable car. To get there, take R571 past Cahermore to its terminus. As you sway wildly in the wooden cable car, reading the text of Psalm 91 (which has kindly been posted to comfort the nervous), you might wonder whether a ferry

would have been a wiser option. It wouldn't. Apparently the channel between the island and the mainland is often too treacherous to permit regular crossing by boat. There is no lodging on the island, so be sure you know when the last cable car departs for the mainland. ☹ Half-day. For schedule information, call ☎ 027/73017.

Take the R572 to Glengarriff. Then catch a ferry to Innacullin. 55km (34 miles).

2 ★★ Innacullin (Garinish Island). Officially known as Innacullin but usually referred to as Garinish, this little island is beautiful and tran-



> Sometimes it's about the journey, not just the destination: the breathtaking ferry to Ilnacullin.

quail. It used to be a barren outcrop, whose only distinguishing feature was a Martello tower left over from the Napoleonic Wars. Then, in 1919, the English landscaper Harold Peto was commissioned to create an elaborately planned Italianate garden with classical pavilions and myriad unusual plants and flowers. The island's unusually mild microclimate allows a number of subtropical plant species to thrive here; indeed, George Bernard Shaw is said to have written *St. Joan* under the shade of its palm trees. The island can be reached for a round-trip fee of approximately €11 per person on a covered ferry

operated by **Blue Pool Ferry**, the Blue Pool, Glengarriff (☎ 027/63333; www.bluepoolferry.com), or **Harbour Queen Ferries**, the Harbour, Glengarriff (☎ 027/63116). Boats run back and forth every 30 minutes. ⌚ 1½ hr. Glengarriff, Co. Cork. ☎ 027/63040. Tickets to gardens €4 adults, €3 seniors, €2 students and kids, €10 families. Mar and Oct Mon–Sat 10am–4:30pm, Sun 1–5pm; Apr–June and Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6:30pm, Sun 1–7pm; July–Aug Mon–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun 11am–6:30pm. Closed Nov–Feb. Last landing 1 hr. before closing.



> **THIS PAGE** The stone circle at Drombeg is oriented to the winter solstice. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Mizen Head was the last view many Irish emigrants saw of their homeland.

Back at Glengarriff, take the N71 south to Bantry. 18km (11 miles).

3 ★★ Bantry House (Bantry). This Georgian house was built around 1750 for the earls of Bantry. It holds furniture and objets d'art from all over Europe, including Aubusson and Gobelin tapestries said to have been made for Marie Antoinette. The gardens, with original statuary, are beautifully kept—climb the steps behind the building for a panoramic view of the house, gardens, and Bantry Bay. The house also holds an informative exhibition on the ill-fated Spanish armada, which, led by the Irish rebel Wolfe Tone, attempted to invade the country near Bantry House in 1769. If you really love it, you can spend the night (rooms €200–€300). ⌚ 2 hr. Bantry. ☎ 027/50047. www.bantryhouse.ie. Tickets €10 adults, €8 students and seniors, €3 kids 5–16, free for kids 4 & under. Mar 17–Oct daily 10am–6pm. Closed Nov to mid-Mar.

Take the N71 to Leap. Turn right onto the R597. Follow signs for Drombeg Stone Circle. 49km (30 miles).

4 ★★ Drombeg Stone Circle. This ring of 13 standing stones is the finest example of a megalithic stone circle in County Cork. Hills slope gently toward the sea nearby, and the builders could hardly have chosen a more picturesque spot. The circle dates from 153 B.C., and little is known about its ritual purpose. Just west of the circle are the remains of two huts and a cooking place; it is thought that heated stones were placed in a water trough (which can be seen adjacent to the huts), and the hot water was used for cooking. The cooking place dates from between A.D. 368 and 608. ⌚ 20 min. Off R597 between Rosscarbery and Glandore.

Take the R597 to the N71 and turn right, toward Clonakilty. Follow signs for the Michael Collins Memorial Centre. 24km (15 miles).

5 ★ Michael Collins Memorial Centre (Clonakilty). This center is frequented by those who revere Collins more than by those who want to learn more about him. It's on the farm where the Irish revolutionary was born





> *Bantry House is still occupied by descendants of the Earl of Bantry; you too can live like an earl, for a price.*

and raised—the old stone farmhouse in which he was born still survives, although the larger farmhouse into which his family moved when Michael was 10 was burned to the ground in 1921 by the Black and Tans. The ambush site at Béal na Bláth, near Macroom, where he was assassinated, is kept as a shrine of sorts. ⌚ 30 min. www.michaelcollinscentre.com. Signposted off N71, 5.6km (3½ miles) west of Clonakilty, Woodfield.

Backtrack on the N71 to Ballydehob. Turn left onto the R592 down the coast. After Altar, turn right onto the R591. After Goleen, follow signs for Callras, Callaros Eighter, and Knockeenagearagh. This road leads to Mizen Head. 80km (50 miles).

6 ★★★ Mizen Head. At Mizen Head, the very end of Ireland, the land falls precipitously into the

Atlantic breakers in a procession of spectacular 210m (689-ft.) sea cliffs. You can cross a suspension bridge to an old signal station, now a visitor center, and stand on a rock promontory at the southernmost point of the Irish mainland. The sea view is spectacular, and whales, seals, dolphins, and seabirds contribute to the spectacle. Regardless of the weather, it's worth a trip. On wild days, tremendous Atlantic waves assault the cliffs. On a clear day, seals bask on the rocks. On the way out to Mizen Head, you'll pass Barleycove Beach, a gorgeous stretch of sand and rock. ⌚ 30 min. Mizen Head. ☎ 028/35115. www.mizenhead.net. Tickets €6 adults, €4.50 seniors and students, €3.50 kids, free for kids 4 & under. Mid-Mar to May and Oct daily 10:30am–5pm; June–Sept daily 10am–6:30pm; Nov to mid-Mar Sat–Sun 11am–4pm. Closed weekdays Nov to mid-Mar. Take R591 to Goleen and follow signs for Mizen Head.

Where to Stay in West Cork



> *The handsome Sea View House hotel.*

★★ **Ballylickey Manor House** BALLYLICKEY

Situated on a rugged inlet with a stunning view of Bantry Bay, with sculpted lawns and gardens and a backdrop of mountains and moorlands, this 300-year-old manor house has five large suites and seven spacious, well-decorated cottages clustered around a pool. The decor is country-style chic with an international flair, thanks to Franco-Irish owners and a largely European clientele. Bantry-Glengarriff rd. (N71), Ballylickey. ☎ 027/50071. www.ballylickeymanorhouse.com. 14 units. Double €170–€350. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Nov–Feb.

★★ **kids** **Baltimore Harbour Hotel** BALTIMORE

Nearly every room here has a lovely view. The bar, garden room, and Clipper Restaurant are fresh, bright, and inviting with a contemporary nautical feel. Guest rooms are simple but comfortable, with extraordinary views of the harbor. Room nos. 216 and 217 are especially spacious, at no extra cost. The 18 suites are ideal for families, as is the kids' club (for ages 4 and older) with activity programs in summer and on Irish holiday weekends. Signposted off R595 in Baltimore. ☎ 028/20361. 64 units. Double €120–€168. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Fortview House** GOLEEN

Pristine country-style rooms here have beamed ceilings, antique pine furniture, wood floors, and iron and brass beds with crisp Irish linens. Violet Connell's breakfasts are legendary, with seven varieties of fresh-squeezed juices, hot potato cakes, pancakes, kippers, and smoked salmon. Two three-bedroom self-catering cottages sleep six on the Fortview grounds (€400 per week low season; €950 per week midsummer). On R591 from Durrus toward Goleen. ☎ 028/35324. www.fortviewhousegoleen.com. 5 units. Double €100. No credit cards. Closed Nov–Feb.

★ **Glebe Country House** BANDON

Built in 1690 as a rectory, Glebe House is now a gracious guesthouse. Charming rooms are comfortable and individually decorated, with views of the rose and herb gardens that wreath the house. The spacious dining room is a lovely setting for candlelit five-course dinners partly drawn from the garden. Dinners cost €35; book before noon and bring your own wine. Breakfast includes waffles, scrambled eggs with rosemary shortbread, and "cheesy French toast." Balinadee (off Balinadee center), Bandon. ☎ 021/477-8294. www.glebecountryhouse.ie. 4 units and 2 self-catering units. Double €90–€110; €325–€570 per week for self-catering apartments. MC, V.



> Greens wreath the entrance to Glebe Country House.

★ **The Heron's Cove** GOLEEN

Locals flock to the Heron's Cove for terrific seafood. Visitors get to head upstairs after dinner with wine to a room with a balcony overlooking a sheltered moonlit cove. Rooms are simple but comfortable, and the atmosphere is very friendly. Signposted in the center of Goleen. ☎ 028/35225. www.heronscove.com. 5 units. Double €110. AE, MC, V.

★★★ **Longueville House Hotel** MALLOW

This palatial 1720 house is refined yet rural, without a hint of pretense. Guest rooms are furnished with family heirlooms and period pieces, and most have bucolic views of the surrounding gardens, grazing pastures, or vineyards. The Presidents' Room is an award-winning restaurant where chef/owner William O'Callaghan demonstrates his gifts and the bounty of the hotel's farm and gardens. In the summer, meals are also served in a gorgeous, sky-lit Victorian conservatory. Killarney rd. (N72), Mallow. ☎ 022/47156. www.longuevillehouse.ie. 20 units. Double €235–€260. Dinner €55. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **Rock Cottage** SCHULL

This new B&B is a secluded, relaxing retreat in Lord Bandon's former hunting lodge. Spacious guest rooms in the Georgian building are elegant and comfortable. Hostess Barbara Klötzer is a former head chef who now focuses her culinary wizardry on her lucky guests. Barnatonicane Schull. ☎ 028/35538. www.rockcottage.ie. 3 units. Double €140. 3-course dinner €45. MC, V. 11km (6¾ miles) from Durrus on R591.

★ **Rolf's Country House** BALTIMORE

In a complex of cut-stone buildings, this long-established family-run guesthouse overlooks the harbor and the Mizen peninsula. All guests have access to the open, self-catering kitchen, but why compete with **Rolf's Cafe Art & Restaurant**, which features a rotating exhibit of contemporary Irish painting and sculpture? Private little bungalows rent for €500 to €800 per week. .5km (½ mile) off R595, signposted outside Baltimore center, Baltimore. ☎ 028/20289. www.rolfsholidays.eu. Double €80–€100. MC, V.

★★ **Seaview House Hotel** BALLYLICKY

This handsome seaside hotel is homey and full of interesting heirlooms and fine antiques. Cheerily decorated rooms are individually furnished in a manner grandma would like, with dark woods, busy fabrics, and mattresses firm enough to bounce a penny on. Request a front room for views of Bantry Bay through the leafy trees. The award-winning restaurant's chefs don't shirk from dollops of fresh cream, real butter, a slug of booze now and then, and salt. Bantry-Glengarriff rd. (N71), Ballylickey. ☎ 027/50073. www.seaviewhousehotel.com. 25 units. Double €150–€170. Entrees €20–€30. Lunch & dinner daily. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Nov to mid-Mar.

★★★ **West Cork Hotel** SKIBBEREEN

The public areas in this comfy old hotel—particularly the buzzy pub—always draw a local crowd. Guest rooms are relaxing and old-fashioned with traditional Irish dark woods and mismatched patterns. The handsome yellow building at the Kennedy bridge is the first thing you see if you enter Skibbereen from the west on N71. Ilan St., Skibbereen. ☎ 028/21277. www.westcorkhotel.com. 30 units. Double €110–€150. AE, MC, V.

★ **Westlodge Hotel** BANTRY

This modern three-story hotel is generic but handy for families. But the leisure center is excellent, offering a wide array of child-friendly amenities. The lobby and guest rooms are sunny and airy, enhanced by wide windows, blond-wood furnishings, and bright Irish fabrics. Westlodge specializes in family holidays and offers organized activities for children from June to August. Off the Bantry-Glengarriff rd. (N71), Bantry. ☎ 027/50360. www.westlodgehotel.ie. 95 units. Double €130–€140. AE, DC, MC, V.

Where to Dine in West Cork

★★ **Blair's Cove** DURRUS INTERNATIONAL

Owners Philip and Sabine de Mey have converted an old stone barn into one of the best dining experiences in southwest Ireland. This romantic restaurant has it all: a stone-walled, high-ceilinged dining room; open fireplaces; and windows overlooking majestic Dunmanus Bay. You begin with the hors d'oeuvre buffet of cold starters—perhaps salmon fumé, prawns, oysters, or mousse—and then move on to the main course—perhaps rack of lamb or grilled rib of beef, or maybe monkfish filet flambéed in Pernod. Don't look for cutting-edge fusion; this place is all about familiar classic dishes done better than you've had them elsewhere. Barley Cove Rd., Durrus. ☎ 027/61127. www.blairscove.ie. Dinner with starter buffet €55. MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sat. Closed Nov to mid-Mar.

★ **Casino House** KILBRITTAIN INTERNATIONAL

The views of Courtmacsherry Bay from this lovely restaurant are exquisite, and the interior is Nantucket meets Provence. The seasonal food is similarly fine. Starters might include ricotta, vegetables, and tofu in phyllo pastry; cream of carrot soup with caramelized walnuts; or terrine of quail with pistachio nuts and shiitake mushrooms. Main dishes might include roast duck with Madeira, or chef Michael Relja's melt-in-your-mouth sole with spring onions and wild rice. The wine list includes good values from Germany and Italy. Coulmain Bay, Kilbrittain. ☎ 023/49944. Entrees €20–€30. MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sun; lunch Sun. 16km (10 miles) from Kinsale on the coast rd. (R600).

★ **Chez Youen** BALTIMORE SEAFOOD

Overlooking the marina of this picturesque harbor town, the style of Frenchman Youen Jacob's restaurant evokes his native Brittany with beamed ceilings, candlelight, and an open copper fireplace. Lobster is the specialty here, fresh from local waters, but the steaks, poached wild salmon, and leg of lamb are also very good. The owners also run the neighboring Baltimore Bay Guesthouse and the lower-priced bistro, **La Jolie Brise**. The Pier, Baltimore. ☎ 028/20136. www.youenjacob.com/chez_youen. Fixed-price dinners



➤ *A veritable feast at Blair's Cove.*

€30–€40; entrees €26–€55. AE, DC, MC, V. Mar–Oct dinner daily; lunch Sun.

★ **The Customs House** BALTIMORE SEAFOOD

This famed restaurant serves excellently prepared fresh seafood. The day's choices might be red mullet with tapenade, grilled squid with hot salsa, or John Dory with spinach, soy, and ginger. Desserts like the poached pear with roasted almond ice cream are elegant and simple. The dress code is smart casual. Children under 12 would most likely feel like a fish out of water. 50m (164 ft.) from the pier (beside the Garda Station), Baltimore. ☎ 028/20200. Fixed-price dinners €30–€40. No credit cards. Dinner Wed–Sat. Closed Oct to mid-Mar.

★ **Good Things Café** DURRUS CAFE

One of our favorite restaurants in Cork, this tiny, bare-bones bistro uses the freshest local produce and artisan cheeses, breads, and foodstuffs to make simply perfect meals. Even a humble omelet or salmon in puff pastry manages to be memorable. For dessert, don't miss Murphy's Ice Cream, trucked in from County Kerry. Ahakista Rd., Durrus. ☎ 027/61426. www.thegoodthingscafe.com. Lunch dishes €8–€20; entrees €15–€28; lobster €38. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Wed–Mon.



The Heron's Cove GOLEEN SEAFOOD

Locals know they can count on Heron's Cove for excellent casual dining. The modest dining room has a splendid view of a secluded cove, while the menu focuses on local seafood, with selections for vegetarians and carnivores. Typical dishes include Heron's Cove crab cakes with wasabi mayonnaise or pan-fried filet of John Dory served with balsamic butter. For dessert, indulge in the Russian cheesecake—the house speciality. The international wine cellar is open for browsing. Signposted in the center of Goleen. ☎ 028/35225. www.heronscove.com. Entrees €20–€28. AE, DC, MC, V. May–Oct Lunch & dinner daily.

★ Mary Ann's SKIBBEREEN PUB GRUB

Dating from 1844, this rustic pub on a hill serves a superlative pub menu of fresh seafood salads and West Cork cheese plates, as well as more ambitious dishes, such as scallops *meunière* and sirloin steak with garlic butter. On sunny days, sit outside in the attractive courtyard. Castletownshend, Skibbereen. ☎ 028/36146. Entrees €15–€22. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

➤ TOP Fine dining at Casino House. BOTTOM Mary Ann's serves ambitious pub grub.

County Cork Fast Facts

Arriving

BY PLANE **Cork Airport**, Kinsale Road (☎ 021/413131; www.cork-airport.com), is served by **Aer Arann**, **Aer Lingus**, **British Airways**, and **Easyjet**. **BY BUS** In Cork, **Bus Éireann** (☎ 021/450-8188; www.buseireann.ie) runs from the **Parnell Place Bus Station** (☎ 021/450-8188; www.buseireann.ie) to all parts of the Republic. Buses arrive at the Esso station on Pier Road, across from the tourist office. **BY TRAIN** **Iarnród Éireann/Irish Rail** (toll-free ☎ 1850/366222 or 01/836-6222; www.irishrail.ie) to Cork from Dublin, Limerick, and other parts of Ireland. Trains arrive at Kent Station, Lower Glanmire Road, in eastern Cork City (☎ 021/450-6766). Kinsale does not have a train station. **BY FERRY** Ferry routes into Cork from Britain include service from Swansea on Swansea/Cork Ferries (☎ 021/483-6000; www.swanseacorkferries.com), and from Roscoff on Brittany Ferries (☎ 021/427-7801; www.brittany-ferries.com). Boats dock at Cork's Ringaskiddy Ferryport. **BY CAR** The N8 from Dublin, N25 from Waterford, N20 from Limerick, N22 from Killarney, and N71 from West Cork. Kinsale is off N71.

ATMs/Cashpoints

CORK CITY **Ulster Bank** (88 Patrick St.; ☎ 021/427-0618); **TSB** (40 Patrick St.; ☎ 021/427-7555); **Allied Irish Bank** (26 Patrick St.; ☎ 021/427-1495). **KINSALE** **Allied Irish Bank**, Pearse Street; **Bank of Ireland**, Emmett Street.

Dentists & Doctors

For medical emergencies dial ☎ 999. **DOCTORS** **Dr. Claire McCarthy**, 32 Oliver Plunkett St., Cork (☎ 021/427-5400); **The Medical Centre**, Kinsale (☎ 021/477-2253). **DENTISTS** **Smiles Dental Spa**, 112 Oliver Plunkett St., Cork (☎ 021/427-4706); **Market Green Dental Care**, Middleton (☎ 021/463-4930).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ 999 for police, ambulance, or fire emergencies. **Cork University Hospital**, Wilton Rd. (☎ 021/454-6400).

Internet Access

CORK CITY **Cork City Library**, 57 Grand Parade (☎ 021/492-4900; €1 for 30 min.); **Wired to the World**, 12A Washington St. (☎ 021/490-5695; www.wiredtotheworld.ie). **KINSALE** **Elasnik Web Café**, 6A Exchange Building, Market Square (☎ 021/477-7356; www.elasnikcomputers.com); **Finishing Services Internet Café**, 71 Main St. (☎ 021/477-3571).

Pharmacies

O'Sullivan's Chemist, South Douglas Road, Cork City (☎ 021/489-1383). **The Regional Late Night Pharmacy**, 7 Pearse St., Kinsale (☎ 021/477-2629).

Police

Cork's main **Garda Station** is on Anglesea Street (☎ 021/452-2000).

Post Office

CORK CITY Oliver Plunkett Street, Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm (from 9:30am Tues.). **KINSALE** Pearse Street, Monday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm (closed for lunch 1-2pm), Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Taxis

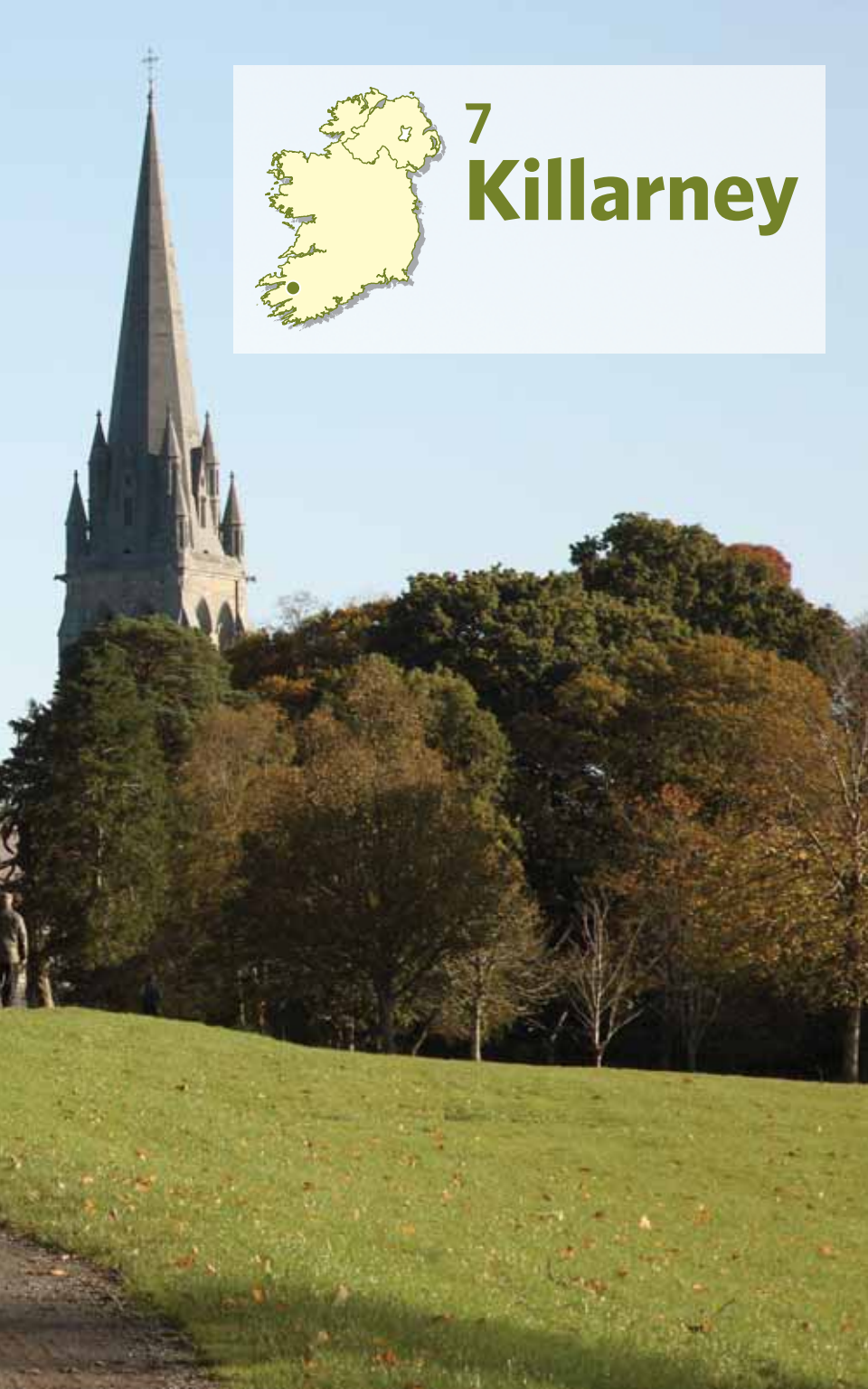
CORK CITY The main taxi ranks are along St. Patrick's Street, along the South Mall, and outside major hotels. To call, try **ABC Cabs** (☎ 021/496-1961), **Cork Taxi Co-Op** (☎ 021/427-2222), or **Satellite Cabs** (☎ 1890/202020). **KINSALE** **Kinsale Cabs** has cars and minibuses ☎ 021/477-2642.

Telephones

The area code for County Cork is 021. Drop the "0" when dialing from outside Ireland (including Northern Ireland).

Visitor Information **Cork Tourist Office**, Tourist House, 42 Grand Parade (☎ 021/425-5100; www.corkkerry.ie). **Kinsale Tourist Office**, Pier Road (☎ 021/477-2234; www.kinsale.ie), open March through November. **Cobh Tourist Office**, Old Yacht Club in the lower harbor (☎ 021/481-3301), open daily 9:30am to 5:30pm weekdays, 1 to 5pm weekends.





Favorite Moments in Killarney

The 18th-century sidewalks of western Ireland's busiest tourist town are spacious and pleasant enough in winter, when the resident population of 7,000 goes about its business. But in summer they're packed, and the streets are a tour-bus traffic jam that horse-drawn-buggy drivers risk life and limb to push through. We prefer Kenmare, but even so, Killarney—with its good hotels, restaurants, pubs in every price range, and outstanding traditional music scene—is a convenient base for exploring Killarney National Park. Amid the wilds, lakes, and mountains of this UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, you will quickly forget the noise and haste of commercialized civilization.



➤ *PREVIOUS PAGE* A scenic ride through Killarney National Park. *THIS PAGE* Sports fans come for the craic at Tatler Jack.

Rattling around Killarney National Park in a jarvey. These pony-and-cart rides are a lovely way to see this beautiful, sprawling park. Most of them are run by proper old local guys—men who talk to each other in Irish and look like they could tell a tale or two. If you're touring the Muckross Estate, take the time to visit the waterfall—it's a short walk, but worth it. See p 286.

Hanging out at the Tatler Jack. This pub is a great place to hear live music, but the best time

to go and soak up the *craic* is right after an Irish football or hurling match—especially if the right team won. See p 250.

Finding the hidden spots on the Ring of Kerry.

Just outside Killarney, a few secluded pathways lead down from the road to the riverbank.

Everyone seems to miss them—so even when tour buses are thundering overhead, and Killarney Town is a stone's throw away, it's possible to find yourself alone with nature. See p 264.



Rattling around Killarney

National Park in a jarvey **8**

Hanging out at the Tatler Jack **4**

Finding the hidden spots on

the Ring of Kerry **9**

Browsing the crafts at the

Mucros Craft Shop **6**

Indulging in a spa at

Aghadoe Heights Hotel **1**

Exploring the remains of

Aghadoe Church **2**

Walking the shores of

Lough Leane **5**

Wandering the gardens of the

old Knockreer Estate **3**

Walking the Cloghereen Nature

Trail in Killarney National Park **7**

Driving to the Avoca

store at Moll's Gap **10**

Browsing the crafts at the Mucros Craft Shop.

We love poking around this traditional craft shop and art studio on the grounds of Muckross House—and always seem to emerge laden with bags full of gorgeous, newly purchased pottery and woolens. See p 242.

Indulging in a spa at Aghadoe Heights Hotel.

Yes, it's an indulgence, but one we always manage to justify. The attention to detail here is wonderful, from the little water hoses in the steam rooms to the twinkly lights in the showers—which, by the way, are infused with essential oils. The view over Killarney Lakes from the front is amazing too. See p 246.

Exploring the remains of Aghadoe Church.

This beguiling ruin doesn't appear in any guidebook we know—we found it only because it's opposite Aghadoe Heights. Clambering through its abandoned stone doorways and peering into glassless, ivy-covered windows is an experience steeped in mystery.

Walking the shores of Lough Leane. The grounds of this lake are a gorgeous place for a stroll, particularly early in the day when nobody's about and the mist hasn't cleared. In summer, you can rent a boat from Muckross

House and row out to Innisfallen—the island that seems to float above the water in the middle of the lake. It's a great place for a secluded picnic, amid the ivy-covered monastic ruins that lie among its trees. See p 238.

Wandering the gardens of the old Knockreer Estate.

Another place for serene walks, these gardens (to a house that no longer exists) are full of wildflowers in the summer months. But we prefer to visit in the fall, when the air is crisp and the leaves turn to shades of burnt orange. See p 236.

Walking the Cloghereen Nature Trail in Killarney National Park.

In a park where, for most people, the amazing views are everything, this trail was designed to be fully accessible to blind people. We love the way it emphasizes the sounds, smells, and textures of the park over all else. See p 229.

Driving to the Avoca store at Moll's Gap. This is one of our favorite shops in Ireland, selling brightly colored hand-woven items from the heights of a mountain pass along the Ring of Kerry. The last time we visited, we chatted with the lady who worked the register, and she convinced us she had the world's best drive to work. See p 241.

Killarney in 1 Day

Killarney's number-one attraction is the spectacular national park at its doorstep. This 10,000-hectare (25,000-acre) UNESCO Biosphere Reserve encompasses forest trails, bogs, moorland, landscaped gardens, four mountains, three major lakes, and two historic estates. Teeming with rare plants and wildlife, the woods here are the last natural habitat of the Irish red deer, and if you're very lucky, you might even see a white-tailed eagle—extinct in these parts for nearly 200 years until they were reintroduced in 2007. We suggest you devote an entire day to the park—even if a day is all you have.

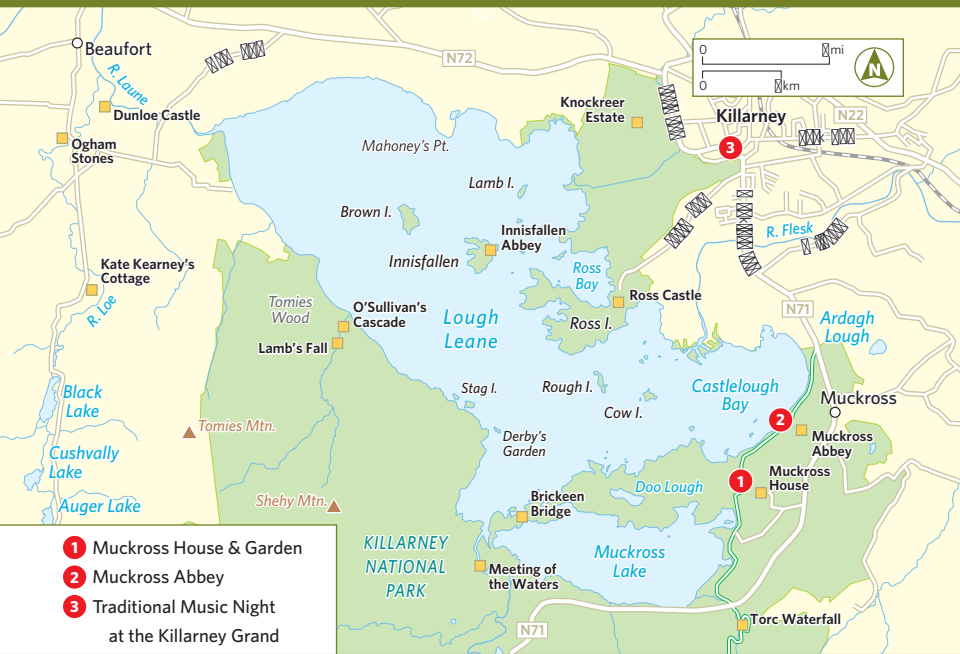
START Killarney National Park Visitor Centre at Muckross House, just south of Killarney on the N71.

1 ★★★ Muckross House & Gardens. It's not hard to find your way from the town center to this glorious, 65-sq. km (25-sq. mile) national park. Just walk or drive from the town parking lot toward the cathedral and turn left. The main visitor center for the park is at Muckross House & Gardens, clearly signposted from main N71 road, a couple miles south of Killarney. A

rambling, ivy-covered Victorian mansion that was donated to the Irish nation in the 1930s, Muckross houses a small museum of locally made furniture, prints, art, and needlework, in addition to a lackluster mishmash of non-Irish items like Oriental screens, Chippendale chairs, and Turkish carpets. The Muckross Estate is lovely, and you can wander to the on-site workshops, where local artisans demonstrate bookbinding, weaving, and pottery. Cars are banned from most of the park itself, so take a

> *Cars are forbidden in the park, but jarvey drivers congregate at Muckross House.*





> Muckross House & Gardens now acts as Killarney National Park's de facto visitor center and museum.



> The mossy woods of the Mossy Woods Nature Trail provide a habitat for local birdlife.

hike or hire a “jarvey,” an old-fashioned horse-and-buggy available for hire at reasonable prices. The drivers congregate behind the visitor center shop at Muckross House (p 226), where you can also pick up maps and other information about the park. The jarveys will take you to all of the park’s main landmarks, including **Ross Castle** (p 234) and the **Gap of Dunloe** (p 236). If you have an hour to spare, we recommend the tour of the Muckross Estate along stony paths in a wooden cart. (If the driver asks whether you’d like to stop off and see the waterfall, say yes. It’s worth the 15-min. walk up there.) Next, we’d take one or two of the park’s planned walking trails (p 229), before heading over to admire the glassy expanses of the **Lower Lake** (p 238). Pack a picnic lunch if the weather’s fine, or plan to make a stop at **The Garden Restaurant**, on the grounds of Muckross House. It has a good selection of sandwiches and cakes at lunchtime, plus a courtyard for al fresco dining.

⌚ Upwards of 3 hr.

2 ★ Muckross Abbey. This 15th-century abbey near Muckross House was founded about 1448 and burned by Cromwell’s troops in 1652. The abbey has an unusual central feature: a vaulted cloister around a courtyard that contains a huge yew tree, said to be as old as the abbey itself. The writer William Makepeace Thackeray called it “the prettiest bijou of a ruined abbey ever seen.” ⌚ 30 min. Near Muckross House. By car, use car park by the Muckross Park Hotel on the N71.

3 ★ Traditional Music Night at the Killarney Grand. A couple of pubs in Killarney Town are famous for their raucous traditional music sessions. Of these, the **Killarney Grand** on Main Street (☎ 064/31159) is probably the most popular. Performances are nightly from 9 to 11pm, year-round. In the summer, you can also check out **The Laurels**, Main Street (☎ 064/31149), and **Tatler Jack**, Plunkett Street (☎ 064/32361).



Walk This Way

Cars are banned on most of Killarney National Park's walking trails, where the ground is a soft carpet of moss and the air is fragrant with wildflowers. Here are some of our favorites. Trail maps are available at the Muckross House visitor center.

The **Blue Pool Nature Trail** starts behind the Muckross Park Hotel (p 248) and winds for an untaxing 2.3km (1.5 miles) along a path of coniferous woodland beside a small lake. The trail is named for the lake's unusually deep blue-green color, caused by copper deposits in the soil.

Cloghreen Nature Trail. Incorporated into a small section of the Blue Pool trail (see above), this walk is fully accessible to blind visitors. A guide rope leads you along the route, lined by plants identifiable by scent and touch. An audio guide is available from Muckross House for a small deposit.

Mossy Woods Nature Trail. One of the park's gentler trails, this route starts from Muckross Lake and runs just under 2km (1.3 miles). The moss-covered trees and rocks it passes are a major habitat for bird life. You'll also see several strawberry trees (*Arbutus*) along the route, which is something of a botanical mystery. They're commonplace around these parts but found almost nowhere else in Northern Europe. The route offers some incredible views of the Torc Mountains and the memorably named Macgillycuddy's Reeks (p 289).

Serious hikers might be interested in the **Kerry Way** (www.kerryway.net), a long-distance trail that roughly follows the Ring of Kerry. The entire route is 202km (126 miles) long; detailed maps are available from the Killarney and Kenmare tourist offices.



1014 IRISH KING BRIAN BORU is killed in battle. His legendary harp is passed through the ages to its current home at Trinity College in Dublin.

1367 WARPIPE BAN The British pass the Statutes of Kilkenny, aimed at squelching Irish influence; they include a ban on warpipe playing. Future bans are enacted by General Cornwall and Queen Elizabeth, making the pipes an Irish status symbol.

1536 HENRY VIII first imprints Irish coinage with the symbol of the harp, which later distinguishes the Guinness label too.

1700 UILLEANN PIPES The Irish get around the British ban on warpipes, then resembling the Scottish bagpipes, by inventing the quieter, lap-held Uilleann pipes that are now considered "Irish" bagpipes.



1745 IRISH WARPIPES are recorded for the last time in the Battle of Fontenoy between the British and Dutch in what is now Belgium.

1840 EDWARD BUNTING, an organist and folk music collector, publishes *The Ancient Music of Ireland*.

1961 THE CLANCY BROTHERS' manager convinces the band to wear matching Aran sweaters from their mother on *The Ed Sullivan Show*; it becomes their trademark look.

1963 THE CHIEFTAINS release their first self-titled album, finally bringing traditional Irish folk music to the mainstream.

1976 THIN LIZZY releases its first worldwide hit, "The Boys Are Back in Town." The hard rock band breaks barriers by mixing Christian and Protestant and black and white members.

FROM THE PIPES TO THE POGUES

Irish Music Through the Ages **BY KATHRYN WILLIAMS**

MUSIC HAS LONG been a thread in Ireland's social, religious, military, and political fabric. According to the ancient Greek geographer Hecataeus of Miletus, the Celts were playing the harp and singing songs to the pagan god Apollo as far back as the 6th century B.C. It's said that when St. Patrick brought Christianity to the Emerald Isle, he taught traveling bards how to adapt the sacred words of the Psalms to secular song.

In the Middle Ages, bagpipes called "warpipes" were carried into battle, and an image of the harp, which had both mythical and Christian significance, was stamped on coins alongside the king's

head. Around the same time, Irish folk music became associated with protest, social unrest, and self-determination—so much so that Ireland's 16th-century English rulers cracked down on it. Since then Irish rebel music has emerged as its own genre, focusing particularly today on the nationalist cause in Northern Ireland.

In the 1960s and 1970s traditional Irish music hit the international scene, paving the way for popular contemporary artists like U2, The Pogues, and The Cranberries. From the pub to the sold-out stadium, music—folk, dance, rock, pop, and punk—remains a source and expression of Irish pride.

1982 THE POGUES, whose name derives from the Irish *póg mo thóin*, meaning "kiss my arse," form in London, fusing Irish folk and punk rock.



1987 U2 Dublin band U2, fronted by Bono and guitarist The Edge, releases *Joshua Tree*, which sells more than 28 million copies.

1990 THE CRANBERRIES The Cranberries saw us forms in Limerick, but vocalist Dolores O'Riordan later shortens it to The Cranberries.

1992 SINÉAD O'CONNOR tears up a photo of the Pope on *Saturday Night Live*.

2001 ENYA *A Day Without Rain*, by New Age singer Enya, sells 13 million copies and spends 103 weeks on the Billboard 200.

2003 AER LINGUS pulls the Irish rebel music of the Wolfe Tones from its in-flight entertainment.



2004 VAN MORRISON Rolling Stone names Belfast native Van Morrison and U2's Bono among the top 40 of their time. Their 500 Greatest Albums list includes *Astral Weeks* at 19 and *Joshua Tree* at 26.

2005 U2 inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

2008 GLEN HANSARD Irish singer-songwriter Glen Hansard co-wins the Oscar for best original song—"Falling Slowly," from the Irish indie pic *Once*.

Killarney in 2 Days

With 2 days to spend in Killarney, you should devote a few hours to exploring the 18th-century town center. Look up for the best details, above the window displays and modern commercial frontages. Then plunge back into the National Park to check out more of its sylvan byways and hidden corners.



> St. Mary's Gothic Revival Cathedral in Killarney is said to have inspired Dracula.

START Fair Hill, Killarney.

1 Franciscan Friary. The imposing gray stone building next to the railway station on Fair Hill is Killarney's Franciscan Church and Friary, built in 1860. It's worth tucking inside to see the beautifully detailed Celtic wall paintings, stained glass windows by Harry Clarke, and elaborately carved wooden Flemish altar. Fair Hill.

☎ 064/31334.

2 College Street/Plunkett Street. Across the roundabout at the end of Fair Hill is College Street, which becomes Plunkett Street, lined with lively pubs, shops, and art galleries.

3 Old Market Lane. Turn right down Bohereencael Glebe, then take the second left into Old Market Lane. Now a handy shortcut to the High Street, this used to be the main commercial district. The old, whitewashed, terraced cottages retain the authentic feel of old Killarney.

4 High Street. Pass through the archway, and you'll emerge onto the High Street. Next to you is the Old Town Hall building, which was also Killarney's main theater at one time. Turn right and walk up the High Street. This is prime shopping territory, so chances are you'll be elbowing through hordes of fellow browsers. Explore some of the side roads and small alleyways leading off the High Street for quirkier and more interesting shops.

5 🍷 Treyvaud's. This popular lunchtime spot does a roaring trade in hearty stews and steak sandwiches. 62 High St. ☎ 064/33062. \$.



6 Kenmare Place. Walk back down the High Street and keep going after it turns into Main Street. Follow the road as it curves around to the left, and you'll find yourself on Kenmare Place, the gathering spot for the town's many horse-drawn "jarvey" drivers. If you fancy a ride, hop on; otherwise, retrace your steps and make a left out of Kenmare Place, followed by an immediate right down Laneway. Turn right on Beech Road and then left onto New Street.

7 Bridewell Lane. Just after the post office, on the left, is Bridewell Lane. This is a lovely, colorful old street; dip in for a quick wander.



➤ Killarney is one of few Irish towns to name its main shopping thoroughfare High Street.

For a moment or two I could see nothing, as the shadow of a cloud obscured St. Mary's Church and all around it. Then as the cloud passed I could see the ruins of the Abbey coming into view; and there, on our favourite seat, a half-reclining figure, snowy white. . . . There was undoubtedly something, long and black, bending over the half-reclining white figure. I called in fright, "Lucy! Lucy!" and something raised a head, and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes.

BRAM STOKER, FROM DRACULA



➤ **THIS PAGE** From Ross Castle, catch a boat tour of the Killarney Lakes. **OPPOSITE PAGE** A serene treatment room at Hotel Europe's ESPA.

8 St. Mary's Cathedral. If you think this limestone cathedral looks more Castle Dracula than parish church, it may be because New Street was once the home of Bram Stoker, who spent summers in Killarney while he was a student at Trinity College. Officially known as the Catholic Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, it's designed in the Gothic Revival style, in the shape of a cross. Construction began in 1842, was interrupted by the famine, and concluded in 1855, although the towering spire wasn't added until 1912. ⌚ 30 min. Cathedral Place, off New St., Killarney. ☎ 064/31014. Free admission. Daily 10:30am–6pm.

9 ★ Ross Castle. Just outside of Killarney Town, this 15th-century fortress still guards the edge of the Lower Lake. All that remains is a tower house, surrounded by a fortified bawn (walled garden) with rounded turrets. While you can wander the grounds at will, you can go inside the castle only on a guided tour, although you don't really see much. In good weather, the

best way to reach the castle is via a lakeside walk (it's 3km/1¾ miles from Killarney to the castle). ⌚ 45 min. Ross Rd., off the N71, Killarney. ☎ 064/35851. Tickets €5.30 adults, €3.70 seniors, €2.10 students and kids. Mar–May daily 9:30am–5:30pm; June–Aug daily 9:30am–6:30pm; Sept to mid-Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm; mid-Oct to mid-Nov daily 9:30am–4:30pm. Last admission 45 min. before closing.

10 ★ Killarney Lakes. The covered boat tours that depart from Ross Castle are a touristy but nonetheless beautiful way to see the lakes—the park's most emblematic feature. For a detailed tour of the lakes, see p 238. ⌚ 1 hr. The Pier, Ross Castle, Ross Rd., off the N71, Killarney.

11 🛀 Hotel Europe. If you want to spend quality time by the water and money is no object, consider staying at the **Hotel Europe**. Directly overlooking the Lower Lake, the views from the luxurious spa are hard to beat. ☎ 064/71300; www.theeurope.com. \$\$\$.



Killarney in 3 Days

Officially part of the National Park, the Gap of Dunloe is a magnificently beautiful spot a few miles to the north of Killarney. Spend the morning here, then strike out for a tour of nearby Crag Cave in the afternoon. Leave a couple of hours for a trip to Muckross Traditional Farms—especially if you're traveling with kids.



> The spectacularly scenic and hard to pass Gap of Dunloe is best explored by bike or jarvey.

START Muckross Farms is on the N71 south of Killarney.

1 ★ Kids Muckross Traditional Farms. Not far from the Muckross House estate, these farms are designed to demonstrate what traditional farm life was like in previous centuries in County Kerry. It's cleverly done—the farmhouses and barns are so authentically detailed that you feel as if you've dropped in on real farms. And farmhands really work the fields, while the blacksmith, carpenter, and wheelwright ply their trades. Women draw water from the wells and cook meals in historically accurate kitchens. Children get a kick out of the animals, and it's interesting enough to keep adults from getting bored as well. **Note:** A combination ticket allows you to visit Muckross House for a small extra fee. ⌚ 2 hr. At Killarney

National Park, on the N71, Killarney. ☎ 064/31440. www.muckross-house.ie. Tickets €6.50 adults, €5 seniors, €3 students and kids. With Muckross House €10 adults, €8 seniors, €5 students and kids. Mid-Mar to Apr and Oct Sat–Sun 1–6pm; May daily 1–6pm; June–Sept daily 10am–7pm.

2 Knockreer Estate. Once the demesne of Knockreer House, which has long since disappeared, these lovely gardens encompass 200-year-old trees, sweet wildflowers, and incredible views of the lake and valley. A scenic pathway leads down to the River Deenagh. Main access to Knockreer is through Deenagh Lodge Gate, opposite the cathedral, in town.

3 ★★ Gap of Dunloe. A narrow pass between the Purple Mountains and Macgillycuddy's Reeks (p 289), the winding, rocky **Gap of Dunloe** rises



through mountains and wetlands on the western side of Killarney National Park. The route through the gap passes craggy hills, meandering streams, and deep gullies, and it ends in the park at the Upper Lake. Some of the roads can be difficult around here, so many people choose to explore by bicycle (try **David O'Sullivan's Cycles**, New St.; ☎ 064/31282) or by jarvey, which can be booked at the National Park Visitor Centre at Muckross House (p 226) or from **Tangney Tours**, Muckross Close (☎ 064/33358; www.killarneyjauntingcars.com). **Gap of Dunloe Tours**, High Street (☎ 064/30200; www.gapofdunloe.tours.com), also conducts a good guided tour for €30 per person. ⌚ 3 hr. On the western side of Killarney National Park; by car take the N71 to Moll's Gap and follow signs.

4 ★ kids Crag Cave. Believed to be more than a million years old, these limestone caves were not discovered until 1983. Today, they're open for wandering (via guided tour only). The guides accompany you 3,753m (12,313 ft.) into the well-lit cave passage on a half-hour tour revealing massive stalactites and fascinating caverns. Even here there's a crafts shop—it's very touristy but interesting nonetheless. ⌚ 1½ hr. Castleisland, Co. Kerry. ☎ 066/714-1244. www.cragcave.com. Tickets €12 adults, €8 seniors and students, €5 kids



➤ The charming thatched-roof gatehouse at Knockreer Estate now serves coffee and tea.

7 & over. Mid-Mar to Oct 31 daily 10am–5:30pm, until 6pm July–Aug. Off the N21, 24km (15 miles) from Killarney.

Day Trip to Cork

The drive from Killarney to Ireland's second city is a snap. Just find the N22 highway, turn right, and about 88km (55 miles) later, you're in Cork. It's also an easy bus or train ride. For more information on this historic and colorful town, see chapter 6.

Killarney Lakes

The Killarney Lakes are glassy, jewel-like expanses full of hidden treasures. The largest is the 20km (12-mile) Lower Lake—also known as Lough Leane or Lough Lein. It's dotted with 30 small islands, including the enigmatic Innisfallen, with its 7th-century monastery. Start with a look around here, then get yourself onto one of the boat tours that take you around all three lakes. They're heavily touristed, but worth experiencing anyway for the incredible views.



> Rowboats are the transportation mode of choice on Killarney's Lower Lake (Lough Leane), Middle Lake (Muckross Lake), and Upper Lake.

START Rowboats to Innisfallen are available from Ross Castle on Ross Road, off the N71.

1 ★★ Innisfallen. Shrouded in forest, this small island appears to float peacefully on the Lower Lake. Behind the trees is what's left of a monastery that was founded in the 7th century and flourished for 1,000 years. It's said that Brian Boru, the great Irish chieftain, and St. Brendan the Navigator were educated here. From 950 to 1320, the "Annals of Innisfallen,"

a chronicle of early Irish history, was written at the monastery. You can reach Innisfallen by rowboat, available for rental at Ross Castle. Lower Lake, opposite Ross Castle.

2 ★ Killarney Lakes Cruise. From the harbor at Ross Castle, you can catch a covered boat that takes you on a waterborne tour for about an hour. The two boats currently operating are the **Lily of Killarney** and the **Pride of the Lake**. There's little to distinguish them from



➤ *The Lily of Killarney and Pride of the Lake ferry tourists across the glassy surface of Lough Leane.*

each other, apart from sailing times. It's a little on the touristy side—and very popular, so you might want to make reservations—but the views are beautiful nonetheless. ⌚ 1 hr. The Pier, Ross Castle, Ross Rd., off the N71, Killarney. **Lily of Killarney Tours:** ☎ 064/31068. Apr–Oct 10:30am, noon, 1:45, 3:15, 4:30, and 5:45pm. **Pride of the Lakes Tours:** ☎ 064/32638. Apr–Oct 11am, 12:30, 2:30, 4, and 5pm. Both cost €10 adults, €5 kids 11 & under.

③ 🏠 **Dinis Cottage.** Near the Meeting of the Waters, this old tearoom is popular with weary hikers. Look for the graffiti on the

windows; it dates from the early 1800s, when sweethearts would come here to carve their names after getting engaged. Near Old Weir Bridge. ☎ 064/31633. \$.

④ ★ **The Meeting of the Waters.** All three lakes meet at this serene natural channel, which is a rich environment for semitropical plants. This is one of the park's most famously beautiful spots, so you probably won't be alone; but the occasional tour boat is a price worth paying for such a lovely view. The 2km (1¼-mile) walk here from Muckross House is well signposted.



Killarney Shopping A to Z

Antiques & Art

★★ Frameworks

Not a place to shop for bargains, this antique shop could comfortably be filed under “top end of the market.” There’s a very refined jumble of period furniture, sculpture, and objets d’art; most have hefty price tags, although the impressive range of antique maps and prints tends to be more affordable. 37 New St. ☎ 064/35791. MC, V.

★ Frank Lewis Gallery

This gallery sells contemporary and traditional paintings, sculptures, and photographic work—much of it with a Kerry theme—by emerging artists. It’s in a restored artisan’s dwelling near the post office. 6 Bridewell Lane. ☎ 064/34843. www.franklewisgallery.com. MC, V.

★ Killarney Art Gallery

This shop-front gallery features original paintings by leading Irish artists from the Killarney area and elsewhere, as well as art supplies, Irish prints, and engravings. 4 Plunkett St. ☎ 064/34628. MC, V.

> *Killarney Art Gallery carries local art and supplies.*

Bookshop

★ Killarney Bookshop

Stop at this shop for books on the history, legends, and lore of Killarney and County Kerry. It also has a good stock of maps and other books of Irish and international interest. 32 Main St. ☎ 064/34108. MC, V.

Fashion & Clothing

★ Lyne’s of Killarney

This place sells all manner of children’s clothes and accessories, from cartoon-style blankets to funky beachwear, and even communion gowns. 69 High St. ☎ 064/31146. www.lynesofkillarney.com. MC, V.

★★ Mac Bees

One of the more upscale fashion stores in the region, the chichi shelves of Mac Bees are smattered with trendy labels, including Kenzo, Sarah Pacini, and Max Mara. 25 New St. ☎ 064/33622. www.macbees.ie. MC, V.

★ Quill’s Woollen Market

This is one of the best spots in town for hand-



Avoca Handweavers

at Moll's Gap **12**

Brian de Staic **1**

Christy's Irish Stores **7**

Frameworks **14**

Frank Lewis Gallery **13**

Killarney Art Gallery **5**

Killarney Bookshop **6**

Killarney Outlet Centre **10**

Killkenny **15**

Lyne's of Killarney **2**

Mac Bees **16**

Memories Linen & Lace **3**

Mucros Craft Shop **11**

Quill's Woollen Market **4**

Seodoiri na Ríochta **17**

Serendipity **8**

Variety Sounds **9**

knit sweaters of all colors and types, along with mohair and sheepskins. In addition to this shop, there are branches in Sneem and Kenmare on the Ring of Kerry, in Cork City, and at Ballygeary, County Cork (the original shop). 1 High St.

☎ 064/32277. MC, V.

Household & Crafts

★★★ Avoca Handweavers at Moll's Gap

High on a mountain pass between Killarney and Kenmare, this isolated shop is an outpost of the famed County Wicklow weavers. As in all Avoca shops, the stock here features colorful, hand-woven blankets and throws, delicate knitted clothing, and pottery and jewelry in vivid colors. Closed from November to mid-March. Ring of Kerry rd. (N71), Moll's Gap, Co. Kerry.

☎ 064/34720. www.avoca.ie. AE, MC, V.

Killkenny

This prosaically named store is a good all-round stop for Irish-made gifts, including Waterford crystal, Belleek pottery, and Newbridge silverware. 3 New St. ☎ 064/233-000. AE, MC, V.

Memories Linen & Lace

Definitely not what you'd call a no-frills kind of place, this popular store sells all manner of lacy goodies. 74 High St. ☎ 064/34447. MC, V.

Killarney Shopping Best Bets

Best for Designer Jewelry

Brian de Staic, 18 High St. (p 242)

Best for Cheesy Souvenirs

Christy's Irish Stores, 10 Main St. (p 242)

Most Impressive Antiques

Frameworks, 37 New St. (p 240)

Best Fashion Boutique

Mac Bees, 25 New St. (p 240)

Best Unique & Unusual Souvenirs

Serendipity, 15 College St. (p 242)

Best for Traditional Music

Variety Sounds, 7 College St. (p 242)

Best for Local Art

Frank Lewis Gallery, 6 Bridewell Lane (p 240)

Best View from the Car Park

Avoca Handweavers at Moll's Gap, Ring of Kerry Rd. (p 241)



> Frank Lewis Gallery is on a residential street, in a former artist's house.

★ Mucross Craft Shop

On the grounds of Muckross House, this art studio and shop carries on local craft traditions in its weaver's workshop and pottery studio. There is also a wide selection of quality crafts from all over the country. Muckross House, Muckross Rd. ☎ 064/31440. www.muckross-house.ie/craft_shop.htm. MC, V.

★ Serendipity

The shelves of this tidy shop feature a wide range of unusual crafts from local artisans, such as hand-thrown pottery from the likes of Nicholas Mosse and Stephen Pearce, Jerpoint glass, and handcrafted jewelry. 15 College St. ☎ 064/31056. MC, V.

Jewelry

★★★ Brian de Staic

Brian de Staic specializes in Celtic jewelry, handcrafted and engraved with ancient Celtic symbols or the letters of the ogham alphabet, an ancient Irish form of writing. 18 High St. ☎ 064/33822. www.briandestaic.com. AE, MC, V.

★ Seodoiri na Riochta

This small jeweler specializes in gold, with a fairly good range of traditional and modern designs. 10 New St. ☎ 064/36388. MC, V.



> You can't leave Ireland without a newly acquired hand-knit sweater.

Malls

★ Killarney Outlet Centre

Big names, including Kerry Gold and Blarney Woollen Mills, sell discount goods at this centrally located superstore. Fair Hill. ☎ 064/36744.

Music

★ Variety Sounds

A chaotic collection of instruments hides a tiny but colorful interior, crammed to the ceiling with everything a lover of Irish music could possibly want, including instruments, CDs, and sheet music. 7 College St. ☎ 064/35755. MC, V.

Souvenirs & Knickknacks

★ Christy's Irish Stores

A branch of the highly successful County Cork-based enterprise, this large store on the corner of Plunkett Street in the center of town carries an array of wares ranging from cheesy leprechaun souvenirs to genuinely attractive hand-knit or hand-loomed sweaters, crystal, china, and pottery. 10 Main St. ☎ 064/33222. www.christyirishstores.com. MC, V.



Killarney Restaurants A to Z

★★ **Bricin** *TRADITIONAL IRISH*

Seafood dishes and old-time Kerry *boxty* (a traditional dish of potato pancakes filled with chicken, seafood, curried lamb, or vegetables) are the trademarks of this relaxed restaurant above a craft-and-book shop. The seafood is excellent and the service is charming. 26 High St. ☎ 064/34902. www.bricin.com. Dinner reservations recommended. Fixed-price menu €24; entrees €17–€28. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily lunch year-round; dinner Easter–Oct.

★★ **Cellar One** *MODERN IRISH*

The decor of this hip restaurant in the basement of the Ross Hotel brings to mind *Barbarella*. The food is a sassy mix of modern Irish with global influences—filet of Kerry beef comes with tomato and chorizo ragout, and prawns are served with tequila butter and firecracker rice. East Avenue Rd. ☎ 064/31855. www.theross.ie. Entrees €20–€30. MC, V. Dinner daily.

★ **Chapter Forty** *MODERN EUROPEAN*

A recent but very well received arrival on the Killarney restaurant scene. We've yet to try

Chapter Forty for ourselves, but we've heard the seafood platter is outstanding. New St.

☎ 064/71833. www.chapter40.ie. Entrees €22–€30. MC, V. Dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Gaby's Seafood Restaurant** *SEAFOOD*

Showered with commendations and awards, Gaby's is best known for its succulent lobster, served grilled or in a house sauce of cream,

Killarney Restaurant Best Bets

Best Traditional Irish Food

Bricin \$\$ 26 High St. (p 243)

Best Place to See & Be Seen

Cellar One \$\$ East Avenue Rd. (p 243)

Best View from the Window

Kate Kearney's Cottage \$ Gap of Dunloe (p 244)

Best for Kids

Treyvaud's \$\$ 62 High St. (p 245)

Best Place to Blow the Bank

Gaby's Seafood Restaurant \$\$\$ 27 High St. (p 243)

> Award-winning *Gaby's Seafood Restaurant*.



➤ *International fare takes the stage for dinner at Treyvaud's.*

cognac, and spices. Other choices include a giant Kerry shellfish platter—a veritable feast of prawns, scallops, mussels, lobster, and oysters. 27 High St. ☎ 064/32519. www.gabysireland.com. Entrees €25–€43. AE, DC, MC, V. Dinner Mon–Sat.

Kate Kearney's Cottage BISTRO

This lovely old pub overlooks the Gap of Dunloe and serves good, unpretentious comfort food—roast beef, poached salmon, beef burgers, and the like. The place gets its name from a famous



moonshiner who lived here in the 19th century. Gap of Dunloe, Beaufort. ☎ 064/44236. www.katekearneycastle.com. Entrees €12–€14. MC, V. Dinner daily until 9:30pm.

★ **The Laurels** *TRADITIONAL IRISH/EUROPEAN*
Until recently, this cozy bar and restaurant on Main Street was most famous for its lively traditional music night, but these days it's all about the food. The menu is divided between regional favorites—Irish stew, mussels with cream sauce and soda bread—and more widely popular fare, such as pizzas and fajitas. Main St. ☎ 064/31149. www.thelaurelspub.com. Entrees €16–€24. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Mac's of Main Street** *BISTRO*
Opened in 2007 by a pair of local ice cream magnates, Mac's serves crowd-pleasing classics, from shepherd's pie to stir-fry and daily fish and pasta specials. Ice cream's for dessert. Main St. ☎ 064/35213. www.macosofmainstreet.com. Entrees €15–€25. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Mentons at the Plaza.** *MODERN EUROPEAN*
Far more relaxed and friendly than its grand appearance suggests, Mentons offers a good

selection of pan-European dishes with an emphasis on seafood. Mains could include hake with Provençal couscous or hummus strudel with gazpacho. At the Killarney Plaza Hotel, Kenmare Place. ☎ 064/21111. www.mentons.com. Entrees €17–€27. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Molly Darcy's Pub & Restaurant** *PUB FOOD*
This quirky place on the edge of Killarney National Park is named after the owner's extraordinary-sounding grandmother (ask for the story). The emphasis is on traditional pub food, freshly prepared and delicious. Muckross Village, Muckross Rd.. ☎ 064/34973. Entrees €12–€24. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Treyvaud's** *INTERNATIONAL*
This restaurant serves traditional Irish favorites for lunch and a more international menu for dinner. Steaks and roast guinea fowl sit alongside more adventurous fare, including pan-fried ostrich and kangaroo skewers. It all works, and the crowds keep coming. 62 High St. ☎ 064/33062. www.treyvaudsrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Entrees €16–€25. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Tues–Sat.



Killarney Hotels A to Z

*** Aghadoe Heights Hotel & Spa

A few miles outside of town, Aghadoe Heights is a five-star oasis of luxury. Many rooms have breathtaking views of the Killarney Lakes and surrounding hills through floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall windows. Nothing is impossible here, with 24-hour room service and an excellent spa. The hotel's Mercedes shuttle bus will take you into central Killarney for free. **Lakes of Killarney.**

☎ 064/31766. Fax 064/31345. www.aghadoe-heights.com. 74 units. €250–€450 double. MC, V.

★ Earl's Court House

A 5-minute walk from the town center, Earl's Court is the kind of genteel place where guests are greeted with tea and scones. The spacious guest rooms are tastefully furnished with Irish antiques and have a distinct Victorian flair. Some have half-tester beds, others have king-size beds and sitting areas, and nearly all have private balconies—the second-floor rooms, in particular, have clear mountain views. **Woodlawn Junction, Muckcross Rd.**

☎ 064/34009. www.killarney-earlscourt.ie. 24 units. €125–€175 double. MC, V. Signposted off N71.

★ Fairview House

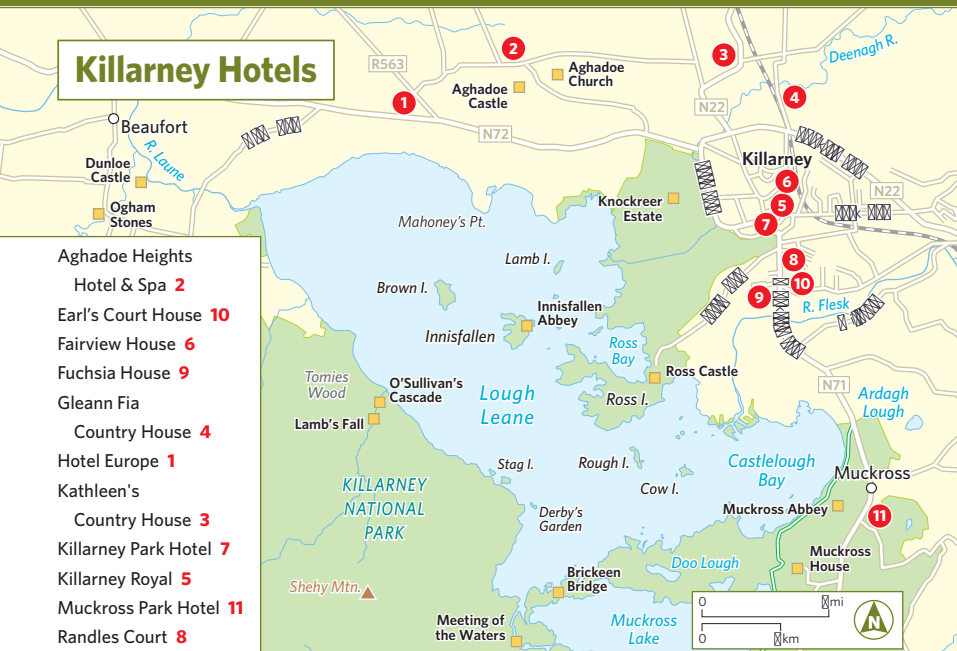
Somewhere between boutique hotel and upmarket guesthouse, Fairview House is airy, modern, and centrally located. Rooms are spacious and comfortable, with polished wood floors, subtle cream and red colors, and enormous beds. There are good-sized family and wheelchair-accessible rooms too. The head chef used to be at the Coopersage, one of Killarney's best restaurants before it closed. Check the hotel website for discounts. **College St., Killarney.**

☎ 064/34164. www.fairviewkillarney.com. €140–€220 double. MC, V.

★ kids Fuchsia House

This modern house built in classic Victorian style is darling. Mary and Tommy Treacy decorated the guest rooms in Provençal style with delicate French wallpaper, well-chosen fabrics in pastel colors, and classic prints on the walls. Families are welcome, and most of the rooms are designed with space for parents and children. **Muckcross Rd., Killarney.** ☎ 064/33743. www.fuchsiahouse.com. 9 units. €120–€130 double. MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to Mar.

> *The penthouse hot tub at Aghadoe Heights offers relaxing views.*



★★ Gleann Fia Country House

Although it's only 1.6km (1 mile) from town, this modern, Victorian-style guesthouse feels pleasantly secluded with thick forests surrounding it like a blanket. Rooms are spacious with firm, comfortable beds, but the main attraction is the soothing quiet of the great outdoors. Deerpark. ☎ 064/35035. www.gleannfia.com. 19 units. €140–€180 double. AE, MC, V.

★★ Hotel Europe

This modern, five-story hotel has a picturesque setting on the shores of the Lower Lake, adjacent to Killarney's two 18-hole championship golf courses and surrounded by mountain peaks. Views from lakeside rooms are spectacular, and most rooms have private balconies. Off Killorglin Rd., Fossa. ☎ 800/221-1074 in the U.S., or 064/71300. www.theeurope.com. 206 units. €240–€350 double. MC, V.

★ Kathleen's Country House

About a mile north of town amid acres of sprawling gardens, this pleasant guesthouse is in a two-story contemporary stone building with lots of big windows. Enthusiastic, efficient

Killarney Hotel Best Bets

Best Family Digs

Fuchsia House \$\$ Muckross Rd. (p 246)

Best Budget Option

Killarney Royal \$\$ College St. (p 248)

Best Spa

Aghadoe Heights \$\$\$ Lakes of Killarney (p 246)

Best Old-World Atmosphere

Earl's Court House \$\$ Woodlawn Junction, Muckross Rd. (p 246)

hostess Kathleen O'Regan-Sheppard has created attractive guest rooms with antique pine furniture and light floral fabrics. The guesthouse is off a busy highway; ask for rooms at the back if you might be disturbed by road noise. Madam's Height, Tralee rd. (N22). ☎ 064/32810. www.kathleens.net. 17 units. €130–€140 double. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Nov to mid-Mar.



> *Monks Bar at Muckross Park Hotel has an air of brandy and cigars.*

★★ Killarney Park Hotel

With a handsome yellow neo-Georgian facade, this elegant four-story property on the eastern edge of town near the tourist office evokes a distinguished Victorian country house. Public rooms are spacious with oil paintings, wainscot paneling, and open fireplaces. There's also a high-end spa. Guest rooms are traditional with quality provincial furnishings, designer fabrics, and marble-finished bathrooms. **Kenmare Place.** ☎ 064/35555. www.killarneyparkhotel.ie. 72 units. €340–€400 double. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ Killarney Royal

This small hotel neatly crosses the line between historic guesthouse and modern hotel with beautiful attention to detail. Owner Margaret Scally elegantly renovated the building with lots of cream and ivory tones. Guest rooms have delicate, carved-wood chairs, luxurious fabrics, and modern accouterments (phones, broadband, TVs). **College St.** ☎ 064/31853. www.killarneyroyal.ie. 29 units. €100–€180 double. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Feb.

★★★ Muckross Park Hotel

Deep in Killarney National Park, this grand place is rich with history. Queen Victoria lunched here, and George Bernard Shaw stayed for a summer writing *Pygmalion*. Recently awarded five-star status, the hotel is furnished in country-house style. Rooms, which vary in size, are done in cream colors, and some have four-poster and half-tester beds. The latest addition is the beautifully designed Cloisters Spa. **Muckross Village (N71).** ☎ 064/23400. www.muckrosspark.com. 70 units. €220–€400 double. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ Randles Court

A former rectory, this yellow, gabled four-story house is just outside Killarney Town on the road to Muckross House. With marble floors and chandeliers and warmed by open fireplaces, the lounges and lobby are quite elegant. Rooms have traditional decor, including heavy armoires, antique desks, and vanities. **Muckross rd. (N71).** ☎ 800/4-CHOICE (246423) in the U.S., or 064/35333. www.randleshotels.com. 55 units. €180–€220 double. AE, DC, MC, V.



Killarney Nightlife A to Z

Cinema

★ Killarney Cineplex

This modern, five-screen cinema in the town center shows standard Hollywood fare with perhaps one or two smaller Irish or British releases. East Avenue Rd. ☎ 0818/221-122. Tickets around €8.50.

Live Music Pubs

★★ O'Connor's

A terrific place to have a pint and catch a performance with an Irish theme, O'Connor's hosts traditional music, stand-up comedy, literary readings, and plays. Performances start at 9:15pm. 7 High St. ☎ 064/31115.

Nightclubs

★ Killarney Grand

This large bar draws a big following for traditional music, played nightly from 9 to 11pm. After that, louder bands come on, and the crowd gets a little younger as the night progresses. Admission is free until 11pm, and rates vary after that. Main St. ☎ 064/31159.

> Jamming Irish-style at O'Connor's.

Killarney Nightlife Best Bets

Best Big Shows

INEC, Gleneagle Hotel, Muckcross Rd. (p 250)

Best Atmosphere

Molly Darcy's, Muckcross Village (p 250)

Best Traditional Music

O'Connor's, 7 High St. (p 249)

Best Sports Bar

Tatler Jack, Plunkett St. (p 250)

Best Late-Night Watering Hole

McSorleys, 10 Coll St. (p 249)

★★ McSorleys

McSorleys is actually four late bars under one roof. The main bar hosts up-and-coming bands on tour and lively, traditional music sessions during the summer. There's also a large dance floor and a cocktail bar. 10 Coll St. ☎ 064/39770. www.mcsorleyskillarney.com. Free admission to main bar; €10 after 11pm.



Pubs

★ Courtney's

This place can get rammed to the rafters on a Saturday night, so avoid it if you're not ready to join in. Live bands cover everything from rock to traditional and folk. 24 Plunkett St.

☎ 064/32689.

★★ Hannigan's

Actually part of the Best Western on Kenmare Place, Hannigan's is a surprisingly handsome old spot where local drinkers outnumber hotel guests. There's also a good bar-food menu, and live music nightly during the summer and weekends year-round. Kenmare Place.

☎ 064/31816.

★★ Kate Kearney's Cottage

Pubs don't come much more scenic than this friendly spot by the Gap of Dunloe. The atmosphere is friendly, and the food is hearty and satisfying. Gap of Dunloe, Beaufort. ☎ 064/44236. www.katekearneycastle.com.

★★ Molly Darcy's

This delightful pub attracts a lively local crowd in the evenings. The place has lots of quirky touches. It's named after a woman with a colorful history to boot—ask for the story. Muckross Village, Muckross Rd. ☎ 064/34973.

★★ Tatler Jack

This traditional pub is a favorite gathering place for followers of Gaelic football and hurling. Traditional music or ballads are scheduled June through September nightly from 9:30pm. Plunkett St. ☎ 064/32361.

Theater & Concerts

★★ Ireland's National Events Centre (INEC)

Ireland's biggest performance venue, the INEC hosts major pop and classical concerts, tours, musicals, theater shows, and sporting events. It's wise to check what's on in advance, as tickets to the big shows can sell out fast. Gleneagle Hotel, Muckross Rd. ☎ 064/71502. www.inec.ie. Ticket prices vary greatly; expect to pay around €25–€60.

Killarney Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR Aer Arann (☎ 061/704428; www.aerarann.ie) offers regular flights from Dublin into Kerry County Airport, Farranfore, County Kerry (☎ 066/976-4644; www.kerryairport.ie), about 16km (10 miles) north of Killarney.

Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) flies direct from London (Stansted) to Kerry. **BY TRAIN Irish Rail** trains from Dublin, Limerick, Cork, and Galway arrive daily at the Killarney Railway Station (☎ 064/31067; www.irishrail.ie), Railway Road, off East Avenue Road. **BY BUS Bus Éireann** operates regularly scheduled service into Killarney from all parts of Ireland. The bus depot (☎ 064/34777; www.buseireann.ie) is adjacent to the train station at Railway Road, off East Avenue Road. **BY CAR** To reach Kerry and Killarney take N21 and N23 from Limerick, N22 from Tralee, N22 from Cork, N72 from Mallow, and N70 from the Ring of Kerry and West Cork.

ATMs/Cashpoints

The main banks in Killarney are **AIB** on Main Street; **Bank of Ireland** on New Street; and **Ulster Bank** and **Permanent TSB**, both on New Street.

Currency Exchange

Major hotels will change money for guests, as will major banks. There's a currency exchange desk at the Kerry County Airport. You can also try the **AIB Bank**, Main Street (☎ 064/31922).

Dentists & Doctors

Your hotel should be able to arrange a doctor or dentist for you. Otherwise, try the **Medical & Dental Centre** on Park Road (☎ 064/34111) or **Dr. Patricia Mangan** at 83 New Street (☎ 064/32488).

Emergencies

For police, fire, or ambulance dial ☎ **999**. The **Killarney District Hospital** is on St. Margaret's Road (☎ 064/31076).

Internet Access

The **Killarney Public Library**, on Rock Road (☎ 064/32655), provides Internet access from its bank of computers. Otherwise, try **Café**

Internet (49 Lower New St.; ☎ 064/36712), **O'Connor's Traditional Pub and Internet Café** (7 High St.; ☎ 064/35088), or **Web Talk** (53 High St.; ☎ 064/37033).

Pharmacies

Try **O'Sullivan's Pharmacy**, 81 New St. (☎ 064/35866), or **Donal Sheahan**, 34 Main St. (☎ 064/31113).

Police

In emergencies dial ☎ **999**. The **Killarney Garda (Police) Station** is on New Road (☎ 064/31222).

Post Offices

The **Killarney Post Office**, New Street (☎ 064/31461), is open Monday and Wednesday to Friday 9am to 5:30pm, Tuesday 9:30am to 5:30pm, and Saturday 9am to 1pm.

Safety

The west of Ireland has very low crime rates, but follow the usual precautions if walking around late at night.

Taxis

Taxicabs line up at the rank on **College Square** (☎ 064/31331). You can also phone for a taxi from **Killarney Cabs** (☎ 064/37444), **Dero's Taxi Service** (☎ 064/31251), or **Euro Cabs** (☎ 064/35624).

Telephones

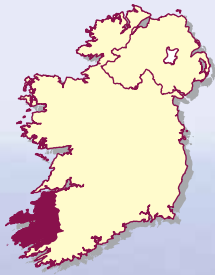
The area code for Killarney is 064.

Toilets

Use the public toilets in the tourist office (see below), and at the national park, or at any major site. There are few, if any, street-based public toilets in Killarney.

Visitor Information

The **Killarney Tourist Office**, Aras Fáilte, is at the town center on Beech Road (☎ 064/31633). It's open October to May, Monday to Saturday 9:15am to 5:15pm; June and September daily 9am to 6pm; July to August daily 9am to 8pm. During low season, the office occasionally closes for lunch from 1 to 2pm.



8

County Kerry





County Kerry in 3 Days

With its softly rolling fields, long, sweeping seascapes, and vibrant little towns, it's easy to see why so many tourists make a beeline for County Kerry. Tourism figures for the county have jumped from fewer than 800,000 visitors per year a decade ago to nearly 2 million now. Given that only 126,000 people live in the county, you can see how it sometimes feels a bit crowded. If you're driving along the congested Ring of Kerry and the crowds are getting to you, simply turn off onto a small country lane and within seconds you'll find yourself virtually alone in the peaceful Irish countryside.



> *PREVIOUS PAGE* A sweeping seaside vista in County Kerry. *THIS PAGE* The Skelligs rise behind Valentia Island.

START Kenmare is on the **N71**. **TRIP LENGTH** 236km (147 miles).

1 ★★ Kenmare. Between the River Roughty and Kenmare Bay, with the Kerry Mountains as a backdrop, this idyllic town has colorful buildings with flower boxes in the windows and some fine boutiques. Its Irish name, Neidin (Nay-deen), means nest; indeed, it's our favorite base while we explore Killarney National Park and our favorite starting point on the Ring of Kerry. It's most fun on a Wednesday, when the weekly **Kenmare Market** (p 274) fills the square

with crafts and antique bargains; we've never come away empty-handed. Kenmare has good restaurants, so eat lunch here before setting out farther along the Ring in the afternoon. ⌚ 3 hr. For details on Kenmare, see p 274.

From Kenmare, take the N71 north toward Killarney. 33km (21 miles).

2 ★★ Killarney National Park. A bucolic refuge with breathtaking scenery just steps from the fracas of Killarney, this national park is the most essential stop along the Ring. If peace



Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants on the Ring of Kerry, see p 268; in Kenmare, see p 276; in Killarney, see chapter 7; in Dingle, see p 282.

and quiet is what you seek, you could skip the Ring altogether and spend the whole day here. The park's boundaries encompass the **Killarney Lakes**; the scenic **Gap of Dunloe**; two estates, **Muckross** and **Knockreer**; and some excellent nature trails. If we don't have more than a couple of hours, our favorite way to see the park is by taking a buggy ride; the men who run them are characters. ⌚ Half-day. See chapter 7 for details.

Killarney is at the northern border of the park, on the N71 (Ring of Kerry) road. From Muckross House to the town center: 6km (3¾ miles).

3 ★ Killarney. Abutting the national park, Killarney Town is the busiest hub in the region. As such, it has the most hotels and restaurants, so plan to spend the night here before continuing with the Ring in the morning. The town center is worth a quick exploration; see



> Dingle has many colorful pubs.

p 232 for a short walking tour. ⌚ 2 hr. See chapter 7 for details.

From central Killarney, head north out of town and join the N72, then the N70 south to Cahirsiveen. 62km (39 miles).



> *Glenbeigh's beaches are the site of the town's annual horse and pony races.*

4 ★★★ Killorglin. We tend to lose count of the darling towns and villages along the Ring of Kerry, but Killorglin is among our favorites on this northern stretch—especially if we happen to pass through in mid-August, when the annual Puck Fair takes place (see right). ☉ 1 hr.

From Killorglin, take the N70 north. Shortly after Milltown, turn left onto the R561. At Annascaul, join the N86 west to Dingle. 52km (32 miles).

5 ★★ kids Dingle (An Daingean) & the Dingle Peninsula. The Dingle Peninsula is a quieter, small-scale alternative to the Ring of Kerry. All you can see for miles are undulating hills, craggy mountains, and a cream-colored shoreline curving at the edge of thick, fragrant woods. At the edge of an incredible stretch of coast, **Dingle Town** has winding lanes, sloping hills, tiny boutiques, and multicolored pubs. Kids tend to love it. The town's most famous resident is **Fungie** (p 286), a dolphin who adopted the place years back, and you can take a boat tour to meet him. The aquarium down by the seafront is excellent. Spend the night in Dingle. ☉ Half-day. See p 278.

Retrace the route back up to the N70, then rejoin the Ring of Kerry south to Glenbeigh. 64km (40 miles).

The Puck Stops Here

Killorglin is a sleepy town between Killarney and the coast—until August 10, at least, when the annual **Puck Fair** (www.puckfair.ie) incites an explosion of merrymaking and pageantry for 3 days. One of Ireland's last remaining traditional fairs, it's technically an agricultural show; the apex of the event involves capturing a mountain goat (which symbolizes the *puka* or *puki*, a mischievous Celtic sprite) that is then declared *King Puck* and paraded around town on a throne, wearing a crown. It's bonkers but wonderful. Nobody knows how it began, but one story dates it to Cromwell's invasion of Ireland in the mid-17th century. English soldiers were foraging for food in the hills above the town and tried to capture a herd of goats. One escaped to Killorglin and alerted the villagers to mount a defense. Others say the fair is pre-Christian, connected with the Pagan feast of Lughnasa on August 1.



➤ Now a fishing village, Portmagee was once a haven for smugglers and is even named for one: Captain Theobald Magee.

6 ★★ Glenbeigh. Start early this morning, because there's a fair amount of driving to do today. Break up your journey to the magnificent Skellig Islands with a stop in this sweet and unassuming seafront town with palm-tree-lined streets and a gorgeous beach. Glenbeigh is at one tip of the long-distance walking path, the **Kerry Way** (p 288). The path runs for 202km (126 miles), traversing several old "green roads" (old, unused routes originally built as make-work famine relief projects). Just outside the town is the **Kerry Bog Village Museum**, a cluster of thatched-roof cottages that effectively demonstrate what life was like in Kerry in the early 1800s. See p 265.

Continue along the N70 to Portmagee. 28km (18 miles).

7 Portmagee. This tiny fishing village is one of the main departure points for the **Skellig Islands** (p 270), so all most people see of it is one end of the road bridge to **Valentia Island** (p 266). It's a lovely place to stop and wander. Come on a sunny day, stand on the harbor overlooking the languidly bobbing boats and multicolored stone cottages framed by misty

Ferry Crossings

You can catch a ferry direct from Portmagee to the Skelligs; you'll see plenty of signs at the harbor. From Portmagee, we recommend crossing with O'Keefe's (☎ 066/947-7103). Most travelers, however, choose to cross first to lovely Valentia Island and cross from the Skellig Island Experience visitor center. For details see p 271.

green hills beyond, and hear yourself whisper: "This is why I came to Ireland."

8 ★★★ Skellig Michael. From Valentia Island, hop a ferry to these magnificent 6th-century stone monastic ruins rising precipitously from an island about 14km (8¾ miles) off the coast. Seeing this UNESCO World Heritage site is a powerful experience worth every bit of the effort required to get there. 🕒 Half-day. See p 270.

To return to Shannon Airport from Valentia Island, take the N70 and N21 to Limerick, then the N18 and N19 to Shannon. 201km (125 miles).

County Kerry in 1 Week

This route makes a complete circuit around the Ring of Kerry, with one major detour—the Dingle Peninsula, a wild and rugged stretch of land between Tralee and Dingle Town. The peninsula is famous for its dramatic coastal views and for its unusually high number of archaeological sites, particularly along the 50km (31-mile) Sleat Head Drive. The tour goes on to complete the southern stretch of the Ring of Kerry, through the seaside resort of Caherdaniel and the tiny, colorful town of Sneem, before returning to Kenmare.



> The coastlines of the Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas are famous for their dramatic views.

START Kenmare is on the N71. TRIP LENGTH 324km (201 miles).

1 * Kenmare.** Start your tour in **Kenmare**, with its riot of colorful buildings snuggled between the River Roughy and Kenmare Bay, with the Kerry Mountains in the distance. It's a good place to shop, especially on Wednesday, when great bargains on local crafts and antiques are to be had at the weekly market. Casually explore the town center in an hour or two, eat a late lunch, and then head on to Killarney in the afternoon before diving into the wilds of the national park the next day. ☹ Half-day. For more on Kenmare, see p 274.

From Kenmare, take the N71 north toward Killarney. 33km (21 miles).

2 ★ Killarney. Killarney is extremely well-equipped for visitors, with the region's densest concentration of hotels and restaurants. The town is small enough that you can cover everything worth seeing on foot in an hour or so. It's another good place for shopping, although you have to look harder for the nontouristy stuff than you do in Kenmare. For details on Killarney, see chapter 7. ☹ Half-day.

Killarney is at the northern border of the park, on the N71 (Ring of Kerry) road. From Muckross House to the town center: 6.2km (3¾ miles).



> Life is quiet in Killorglin, until the crowds descend in August for the pagan fun of Puck Fair.



> *Still spinning after all these years, the Blennerville Windmill remains in operation.*

3 ★★★ Killarney National Park. With a week to spare, we suggest exploring Killarney National Park for at least a day, although we could happily spend a week here. Start by touring the larger of the park's two historic estates, **Muckross**, in a horse-drawn "jarvey." The guys who run these are proper local folks with a tale for every turn. Also within the park's borders are several well-designed nature trails; the 15th-century **Ross Castle**; three lakes, including one with an island containing ancient monastic ruins; and several other natural wonders, including the **Gap of Dunloe** and **Purple Mountains**. ⌚ 1 day. For details on Killarney National Park, see p 226.

From Killarney, take the N72 to Killorglin. 23km (14 miles).

4 ★★ Killorglin. Rise early after your second night in Killarney, for today you're going to cover the northern part of the Ring of Kerry. Take your pick of the many towns and villages on the way, but if you're coming in mid-August, you must stop in Killorglin to experience the annual **Puck Fair**. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 256.

Take the N70 north to Tralee. 29km (18 miles).

5 ★ Tralee. At this point, you leave the Ring of Kerry temporarily for its rugged but less ostentatious neighbor, the Dingle Peninsula. The first major town along the way is Tralee, a town of 22,000 that's a bit rough around the edges despite its pretty name. Check out **Kerry the Kingdom**, an outside visitor center on Denny Street; the restored (and fully operational) **Blennerville Windmill** on Windmill Street in nearby Blennerville (☎ 066/ 7121064; www.blennervilleattractions.ie); and the **Seanchai—Kerry Literary & Cultural Centre Writer's Museum** on 24 The Square in Listowel (☎ 068/ 22212; www.kerrywritersmuseum.com). Just outside Tralee are a couple of great hotels that make a convenient base for the night. ⌚ 3 hr. For details see p 286.

Leave Tralee on the N86 and follow it to Dingle. 49km (31 miles).

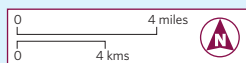
6 ★★ kids Dingle (An Daingean). The coastal road to Dingle is striking in its harsh beauty, but it's vertiginous, so you'll want to take your time. Spend the rest of the day wandering Dingle, browsing its boutique stores and checking out its small but respectable number of visitor attractions. If you've got kids, you'll definitely want to do the **Fungie the Dolphin Tour**, a boat trip out to Dingle Bay to meet the town's resident dolphin (p 286). For more grown-up diversions, head up to Carhoo Hill, overlooking the harbor, to see the remarkable **Eask Tower**. The views are magnificent if the sun is shining. Devote a day to sightseeing in Dingle and another day to exploring the surrounding countryside—possibly tackling the **Slea Head Drive** (see below). On the outskirts of Dingle, the Slea Head drive is clearly signposted. ⌚ 2 days. For details see p 261.

Leave Dingle heading west and turn right onto the R569. Follow signs to Gallarus Oratory from this road. Distance: 7.3km (4.5 miles).



7 ★★ Slea Head Drive. This 50km (31 miles) drive is another of Ireland's great scenic routes. Usually completed in a loop from Dingle, it is famous for the host of archaeological sites it encompasses. ⌚ 1 day.

Leave Dingle on the N86, and then join the



SITE GUIDE

7 Sleat Head Drive

The first stop is the **A Gallarus Oratory**. This small, beehive-shaped church is one of the best-preserved pieces of early Christian architecture in Ireland. Built from the 7th to the 9th century A.D., its walls and roof are made entirely from dry stones without mortar—yet the interior stays remarkably dry. The small visitor center (☎ 066/915-5333) features displays on the history of the Oratory, plus the obligatory information film. **B Dún an Oir Fort**, near Ballyferriter, is a ruined defensive citadel dating from the Iron Age. There's also a small memorial to 600 Spanish and Irish troops who were massacred here by the English in 1580. Most were beheaded; the nearby site where their remains were buried is known locally as "the Field of the Heads." Farther along, **C Dunquin**—a pretty, windswept seaside town with a spectacular coastline—is known to most visitors as the location for the Blasket Island ferries (p 280). But take time for a wander around the town before heading to the **D Blasket Islands**. These wild outposts were once home to a thriving



community, whose unique storytelling traditions have lived on long after the islands were abandoned in the mid-20th century. For more on the Blaskets, see p 280. **E Castlegregory** is a sweet but popular little seaside town, world renowned for the quality of its surf. Watersports fans will be in heaven. For those seeking a little more isolation, **F Cloghane**, a small village on the southern edge of Brandon Bay, also has a glorious beach, and it tends to be less crowded than Castlegregory.



> Enjoy the sites, the views—and the wildlife—on the Sleat Head Drive.



> One of the many colorful store fronts in Sneem—
“the knot in the Ring of Kerry.”

N70 south at Tralee. Turn right onto the R565 at Laharan S. and follow the road to the crossing for Valentia Island. 133km (83 miles).

8 * Skellig Michael.** Fuel up with a hearty breakfast this morning, because you’ve got another long drive ahead. Backtrack along the Dingle Peninsula, and then rejoin the Ring of Kerry before crossing to Valentia Island. From here, hop a ferry over to the magnificent 6th-century monastic site on Skellig Michael, about 14km (8½ miles) off the coast. ⌚ 5 hr. For more on the Skelligs, see p 270.

Back on Valentia Island, go back up the R565 and rejoin the N70 south to Caherdaniel. 30km (19 miles).

9 ** Caherdaniel. An amiable seaside town, Caherdaniel was the ancestral home of Ireland’s “Great Liberator,” Daniel O’Connell. He lived for most of his life at **Derrynane House**, which is now a national historic park. Caherdaniel has a couple of good hotels, so plan to spend your last night here before completing the Ring in the morning.



> *The passage to the Skellig Islands is not as perilous as it once was, but to this day boat service isn't available when the water is rough.*

Alternatively, if you've made very good time, you could press ahead with the final stretch. Kenmare has some of the finest hotels on the Ring—so if you were planning to splurge for 1 night, that's the place to do it. See p 266.

Continue on the N70 around the Ring to Sneem. 21km (13 miles).

10 ★ Sneem. We've yet to drive through Sneem without succumbing to the urge to stop and savor its colorful buildings and uncommonly fine views of the surrounding valley. From here it's just a few miles back to your starting point at Kenmare. If you've still got time before making your onward journey, you could take a **Seafari** boat tour of Kenmare Bay (p 275), where you're likely to spot dolphins, sea otters, and gray seals. ⌚ 30 min.

The Ring of Kerry

The Ring of Kerry is the small highway that skirts the edges of the Iveragh Peninsula. Less romantically, it's also known as the N70, N71, and R562. Undoubtedly Ireland's most popular scenic drive, it takes in panoramas of rugged coastline, tall mountains, and pristine lakes. What you won't find, at least in the summertime, is much in the way of peace. Bicyclists avoid the route because of the scores of tour buses thundering down it from early morning until late in the day. Most people traveling the route start and finish at its largest hub, Killarney, but the town of Kenmare makes for a more charming base.



➤ *The Ring of Kerry's unspoiled beaches, mountains, and lakes draw droves of outdoor enthusiasts.*

START Kenmare is on the N71. **TRIP LENGTH** 197–220km (123–137 miles).

1 ★★★ Kenmare. Originally called Neidin (pronounced Nay-deen, meaning “little nest” in Irish), Kenmare is indeed a snug of verdant foliage and colorful buildings tucked between the River Roughty and Kenmare Bay. See p 274.

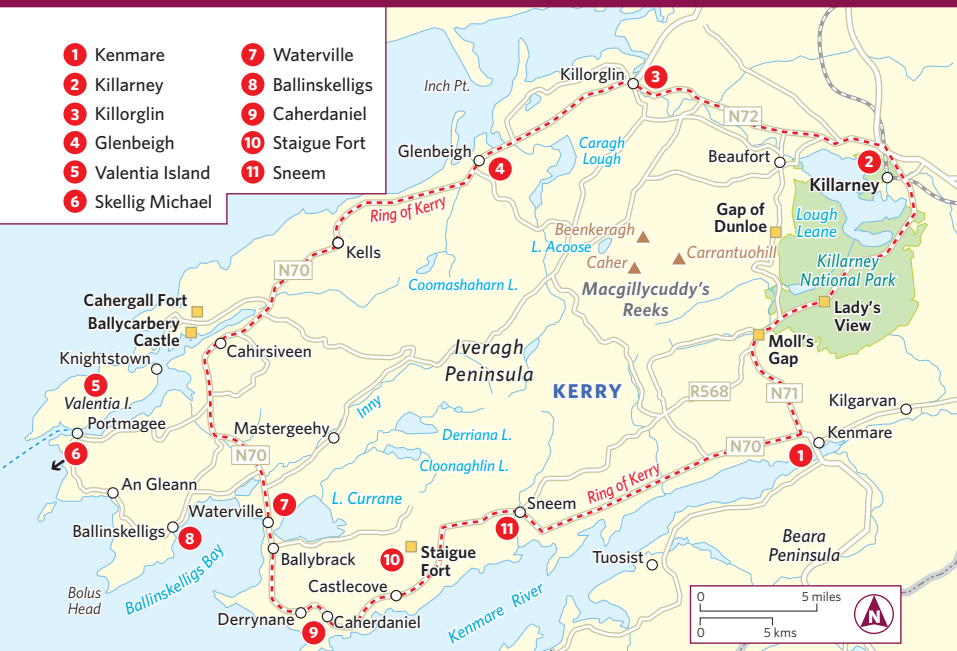
Heading north out of town, follow the N71 33km (21 miles) to Killarney. 33km (21 miles).

2 ★ Killarney. This colorful and busy town is a victim of its own success—although even the leprechaun-laden souvenir shops and overpriced restaurants can't overshadow the spectacular beauty of **Killarney National Park**. For details see chapter 7.

Leave Killarney on the N72 west toward Killorglin. 23km (14 miles).

3 ★★ Killorglin. This smallish town is a sleepy place for most of the year—until things get all Pagan in mid-August with the commencement of the traditional horse, sheep, and cattle fair. It's officially called the **Puck Fair** (p 256), because local residents capture a wild goat (symbolizing the *puka* or *puki*, a mischievous sprite in Celtic legend) from the mountains and enthrone it in the center of town as a sign of unrestricted merrymaking. There's a whimsical statue of a goat by the river in honor of this town's love of the *puka*.

Leave Killorglin on the N70 south to Glenbeigh. Glimpses of Dingle Bay will appear on your right. 13km (8¼ miles).



> Puffins nest on Skellig Michael's craggy cliffs.

4 ★★ Glenbeigh. With its palm-tree-lined streets and sandy beach, Glenbeigh makes a good spot for a break. Nearby is the **Kerry Bog Village Museum**, a cluster of thatched-roof cottages demonstrating what life was like in Kerry in the early 1800s. The museum village has a blacksmith's forge and house, turf-cutter's house, laborer's cottage, thatcher's dwelling, and tradesman's house. Stacks of cut turf are piled high by the road. For more on

Ghost Towns

A stark feature of the landscape, tiny, ruined gray stone cottages are scattered across the Kerry countryside. Most date from the Great Famine of the mid-19th century, when millions of people starved to death or were forced to emigrate. This area was particularly hard hit; the Iveragh Peninsula alone lost three-quarters of its population.

peat, see p 424. On the N70, Ballycleave, Glenbeigh. ☎ 066/976-9184. www.kerrybogvillage.ie. Tickets €4-€6. Mar-Nov daily 9am-6pm.

Continue to Cahersiveen and catch a ferry to Knightstown on the island of Valentia. Glenbeigh to Cahersiveen: 28km (17 miles).

5 ★★ Valentia Island. This serene, leafy little island was one of the first parts of Ireland to be settled by human beings, more than 8,000 years ago. The **Valentia Heritage Centre** explores the surprisingly rich history of the islands, which were used as a smugglers' refuge in the 18th century, and later became the site of the first permanent communications between Europe and America. A small but grand



> *The spectacular view from Iskeroon, a charming bed-and-breakfast in Caherdaniel, off the Ring of Kerry.*

Bridge to Valentia

In the winter, when ferry service is sporadic at best, it's best to use the bridge crossing at Portmagee (*An Caladh*), 12km (7½ miles) off the Ring of Kerry, down the R565. The Skellig Experience (p 270) is on the left as you come off the bridge. To get to Knightstown, continue on the R565 to the northeastern tip of the island. Glenbeigh to Knightstown by road is 51km (31 miles).

monument stands on the spot where the very first message between the two continents was received, on a small stretch of headland appropriately named **Telegraph Point**. It's all rather charmingly "lo-fi." Heritage Centre: School Rd., Knightstown. ☎ 066/947-6411.

From Knightstown, take the R565 to the Skellig Experience visitor center on the southwestern tip of the island. Then catch a ferry to Skellig Michael. 7km (4½ miles).

6 ★★ ★ Skellig Michael. Medieval monks built a monastery in exquisite isolation on this rocky pinnacle of an island. Today, the ruins of their church, reached by way of rambling stone staircases up the sides of cliffs at the edge of the cobalt sea, still convey a sense of deep spirituality. The crossing to the island can be rough, so you'll want to visit on as clear and calm a day as possible, but it's worth the trouble—we think it's the most magical site on the Ring of Kerry. See p 270.

Return to the mainland, then backtrack to the N70 south to Waterville. 23km (14 miles).

7 ★ Waterville. This idyllic beach resort town was a favorite retreat of Charlie Chaplin, whose statue stands on the seafront promenade. The beach here is gorgeous, framed by golden sand and lush green hills. The playwright John Millington Synge described the sea air here as being "like wine in one's teeth." Golf fans will want to stop at the nearby **Waterville Golf Links** (☎ 066/947-4102; www.watervillegolflinks.ie), one of the finest championship courses in Ireland.

Continue on the N70 north out of town, then take a left down the R567 and follow signs to Ballinskelligs. 15km (9½ miles).

8 ★ Ballinskelligs. This coastal village on the edge of the Gaeltacht, where Irish is the primary language, contains the absurdly picturesque ruins of St. Michael Ballinskelligs, a medieval priory overlooking the sea. There's also a sandy Blue Flag beach just past the post office by Ballinskelligs Bay, and at the end of the beach are the remnants of a 16th-century castle.

Return to the N70 south to Caherdaniel. 29km (18 miles).

9 ★ Caherdaniel. The **Derrynane House National Historic Park** is where Daniel O'Connell, Ireland's "Great Liberator," lived for most of his life. The Irish government maintains the house as a museum, filled with documents, illustrations, and memorabilia related to O'Connell's life. Some pieces are more interesting than others—take, for example, the chariot in which he traveled triumphantly through Dublin after



> Sneem sounds like a character from Harry Potter, but is a quaint stop on the Ring of Kerry.

his release from prison in 1844. Caherdaniel.
☎ 066/947-5113. www.caherdanielonline.com.
Tickets €1.50–€2.90. Nov–Mar Sat–Sun 1–5pm;
Apr and Oct Tues–Sun 1–5pm; May–Sept Mon–Sat
9am–6pm, Sun 11am–7pm.

Continue on the N70 and follow signs to Staigue Fort. 8.8km (5½ miles).

10 ★★ Staigue Fort. This well-preserved ancient structure is built of rough stones without mortar of any kind. The walls are 4m (13 ft.) thick at the base. Historians are not certain what purpose it served—it may have been a fortress or just a kind of prehistoric community center—but experts think it probably dates from around 1000 B.C. No phone. Free. 2.5 miles off the N70 just outside Castlecove on a small farm road (follow signs).

Return to the N70 and continue to Sneem. 18km (11 miles).

11 ★ Sneem. This cheery village is small enough that every street feels like it's on the edge of town, with rows of multicolored stone

Turn Back the Clock

You can drive either way along the Ring of Kerry, but we recommend a counterclockwise route for the most spectacular views. Very large vehicles travel this way to avoid accidents and nasty traffic jams around the Ring's perilously narrow bends. This unwritten rule of the road worked fine for years—until the invention of the GPS device, which now sends travelers unfamiliar with the route in a *clockwise* direction, causing chaos and some of the worst traffic jams ever seen on the Ring. Proceed with caution and take a different route if you must get somewhere on time.

buildings framed by the green and brown of the surrounding countryside. Interestingly, Sneem has two town squares, linked by a small stone bridge over a river. Locals call this “the knot in the Ring of Kerry.”

From here you're 28km (17 miles) from Kenmare.

Where to Stay & Dine on the Ring of Kerry



> A cozy fireside seat at Iskeroon bed-and-breakfast.

★★ Ballygarry House Hotel TRALEE

Just outside Tralee, this country inn is elegantly comfortable with lots of big sofas and club chairs to sink down into. **The Monarchs** restaurant is a classy option for relaxing at the end of the day, and the new hotel spa, **Nádúr**, is a soothing, modern oasis. Tralee-Killarney rd., Leebrook, Tralee. ☎ 066/712-3322. www.ballygarryhouse.com. 46 units. Double €200–€220. AE, MC, V.

★ Derrynane Hotel CAHERDANIEL

With sweeping views of the Atlantic, this has to be one of the best-situated hotels on the Ring of Kerry. Guest rooms are comfortable if nothing special, but who cares with a view like this? A local guide is available to take guests on weekend walking trips. Off Ring of Kerry rd. (N71), Caherdaniel. ☎ 066/947-5136. www.derrynane.com. 70 units. Double €180–€200. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ Iskeroon CAHERDANIEL

This is as good as it gets for this price. David and Geraldine Hare's charming B&B sits

amid an arrestingly beautiful natural setting overlooking the sailboats of Derrynane Harbour and the Skelligs beyond. If the view and the exotic subtropical gardens aren't enough, just step inside. The Hares have renovated their 1930s villa in a fresh Cape Cod style with flagstone floors and a deep blue palette, decorated with locally made furniture and tasteful art. Extras include portable DVD players and a vast DVD library. Breakfasts are exceptional, with homemade bread and free-range eggs and bacon. This place is a real find. They've now got a self-catering cottage (€500–€550 per week) for those who would like a little more privacy. **Bunavalla (near pier)**, Caherdaniel, Co. Kerry. ☎ 066/947-5119. www.iskeroon.com. 2 units, all with private bathroom. Double €160. MC, V. Closed Oct–Apr.

★★ **kids** Manor West Hotel TRALEE

Your first sight of Manor West is not very promising—it sits at the edge of Tralee in a shopping center on a busy highway surrounded by parking lots. Inside, however, this modern, efficient, attractive hotel has plenty to



> Serenity now: a guest room at Iskeroon.

offer. Rooms are contemporary, quiet, and comfortable. The **Mercantile Bistro** is a good, family-friendly option for dinner. There's also a great little spa to help you unwind. **Note:** It's a long walk or cab ride into the town center from Manor West if you haven't got a car. Killarney Rd., Tralee. ☎ 066/719-4500. www.manorwesthotel.ie. 77 units. Double €160–€240. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **kids The Shores CASTLEGREGORY**

This modern house affords sweeping views of Tralee Bay from virtually every window. There's a sun deck and a private beach for when the sun shines and a guest library and video rentals for when it does not. Breakfast options are extensive, including smoked salmon and waffles as well as standards. For those in search of additional privacy, there's also a self-catering cottage available for weekly rental. .8km (½ mile) west of Stradbally on the Conor Pass Rd., Cappatigue, Castlegregory. ☎ 066/713-9196. www.theshorescountryhouse.com. 6 units. Double €70–€90. MC, V.

★★ **kids Tahilla Cove SNEEM**

This grand country house sprawls along the edge of the water in a secluded cove near Sneem. The spacious bedrooms are comfortably and simply furnished and have private balconies, some with great views of Beara Peninsula (ask for a room with a sea view). Follow signs from the N70, Sneem. ☎ 064/45204. www.tahilla-cove.com. 9 units. Double €120–€150. MC, V.

★ **The Tankard TRALEE SEAFOOD**

Right on the water's edge, The Tankard's wide picture windows provide gorgeous views of the seafront. The menu focuses on local seafood—lobster, scallops, and prawns—but local meats are also a specialty. Bar food is available all day, but this place is best at sunset. 10km (6¼ miles) northwest of Tralee, Kilfenora, Fenit. ☎ 066/713-6164. Entrees €16–€32. AE, DC, MC, V. Bar food & lunch daily; restaurant lunch & dinner daily.

The Skellig Islands

The craggy, inhospitable Skellig Islands rise precipitously from the sea, where gray skies meet stormy horizons about 14km (8 miles) off the coast of the Iveragh Peninsula. From the mainland, Skellig Michael and Little Skellig appear impossibly steep, sharp-angled, and daunting even today—when the mere act of getting there isn't perilous, as it was in the 6th and 7th centuries when a group of monks built a community on the steepest, most wind-battered peaks. Over time, they carved 600 steps into the cliffs and built monastic buildings hundreds of feet above the ocean. The complex is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



> Early Christian monks carved stone stairs and erected stone beehive huts on windswept Skellig Michael.

START **Valentia Island is just off the Ring of Kerry (R765).**

1 ★★ Skellig Experience (Valentia Island). Just off the Ring of Kerry route (R765) on Valentia Island is this well-thought-out information center. Based on the design of Skellig Michael, its stark stone facade, framed by grassy mounds, blends into the terrain. A series of displays tells the story of the monks who existed in near-total isolation on the Skelligs. There's a section on the geology of the area and an informative bit on the seabirds that are now the islands' main inhabitants. From here you can arrange a boat trip around

the islands. ☎ 1 hr. Heritage Centre, Valentia Island, Co. Kerry. ☎ 066/947-6306. www.skelligexperience.com. Exhibition and audiovisual €5 adults, €4 seniors and students, €3 kids 11 & under; exhibition, audiovisual, and sea cruise €28 adults, €25 seniors and students, €15 kids 11 & under. Apr–Oct daily 10am–6pm.

2 ★★★ Skellig Michael. This UNESCO World Heritage Site encompasses an exceptionally well-preserved 6th-century monastic complex. There is something tragic and beautiful about the remains of the ancient oratories and beehive cells, the largest of which is about 4x4m (13x13 ft.). Historians know very



*Whoever has not stood in the graveyard
on the summit of that cliff, among the beehive
dwellings and beehive oratory, does not know
Ireland through and through.*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

little about these monks and how they lived, although they were apparently influenced by the Coptic Church founded by St. Anthony in Egypt and, like the saint, sought intense isolation. Records relating to the Skelligs indicate that even here, all but completely hidden, the Vikings found the monastery and punished it as they did all the Irish monastic settlements. Monks were kidnapped and killed in attacks in the 8th century, but the settlement always recovered. To this day, nobody knows why the monks finally abandoned the rock in the 12th century. ☺ **Half-day.** For more information on monastic life, see p 272.

3 Little Skellig. Landings are not permitted on Little Skellig, but even if you could get there, all you'd see would be birds. Lots and lots of birds. The islands are home to a vast avian population, including puffins, razorbills, and peregrine falcons. The seas around the islands

Setting Sail for the Skelligs

Most travelers depart for the Skelligs from the **Skellig Experience** visitor center. Departure times and frequency depend on the operator and the weather: If the seas are choppy, the ferries will not cross. Most boat companies cross twice a day, around 10am and again in the mid-afternoon; disembark on **Skellig Michael**; and circle around **Little Skellig**.

The crossing usually takes about 45 minutes. We recommend crossing with **De Lavelle** (☎ 066/947-6124). We highly recommend calling the Skellig Experience or boat operators directly to reserve passage in advance and confirm it on the scheduled departure date. The average cost is €40 per person.

are richly inhabited, too, with both dolphins and basking sharks, while seals are even more common. In other words, this is serious diving territory. Day trips, including wreck dives, can be arranged through **Skellig Boats** (☎ 066/947-9182) in Ballinskelligs, although they aren't for novice divers. The cost is €50 to €75 per person, and you'll be expected to bring along a medical certificate and logbook.

MONK BUSINESS

How Irish Scribes Preserved Western Literature

BY CHARLIE O'MALLEY



THE CONTINENT IN CHAOS

The year is 464 A.D. Europe is overrun with illiterate barbarians, and the mighty Roman Empire is on its knees. The Eternal City is under eternal siege, and its great libraries and universities are about to be looted and burned by the barbarians.

ISLAND RETREAT

Meanwhile, the little-known, isolated island of Ireland is undergoing a spiritual revolution. The savage Gaels are being converted to Christianity by an escaped Roman slave from Wales with a good line in stubbornness. They call him Patricio—known today as St. Patrick.



LATIN LOVERS

The Irish wholeheartedly embrace monastic life just as Europe undergoes a catastrophic middle-age crisis. Christian learning centers pop up across the island, including the remote **Skellig Islands** (p 270), where monks copy the Bible and other works. Master calligraphers, they

IF YOU'VE EVER SWOONED over Brad Pitt in *Troy* or relished the sight of Kate Winslet in the buff, spellbound by Homer in *The Reader*, thank the Irish. *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* may have taken place on the turquoise deeps of the Aegean, but it was on the dark waters of the Irish Sea that many classics of Roman and Greek literature survived the sack of Rome and the ensuing Dark Ages.



produce illuminated books such as *The Book of Kells* and *The Book of Durrow*. Gaeilge is recognized as the first vernacular language in Europe to have been written down. Some of Europe's finest minds flee the continental anarchy for Ireland, bringing books and learning with them. Knowledge-hungry

monks duplicate great Latin and Greek works of literature, interspersing Virgil with their own doodles:

*I and Pangur Ban
my cat
'Tis a like task we
are at
Hunting mice is
his delight
Hunting words I sit
all night.*

THE GOSPEL SPREADS

Post-Patrick preachers, such as Columcille and Columbanus, begin to look abroad and open an overseas franchise selling Irish enlightenment, starting at Iona island in Scotland. With Europe now a fragmented patchwork of fiefdoms, the

hardy Celtic monks set up now-famous monasteries in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Beautifully decorated Irish manuscripts from this period have been found as far away as Russia, where the monks continued to advance the art of bookmaking.

Kenmare

Founded in 1670, Kenmare is our favorite base for exploring the Ring of Kerry. In summer it's still overrun—just not quite as much as its neighbor Killarney. Come spring or fall, tour buses relent significantly in Kenmare, revealing its old-fashioned shop fronts and candy-colored facades. The ideal time to visit is probably mid-May or September, when all the hotels and restaurants are open but not yet flooded with guests.

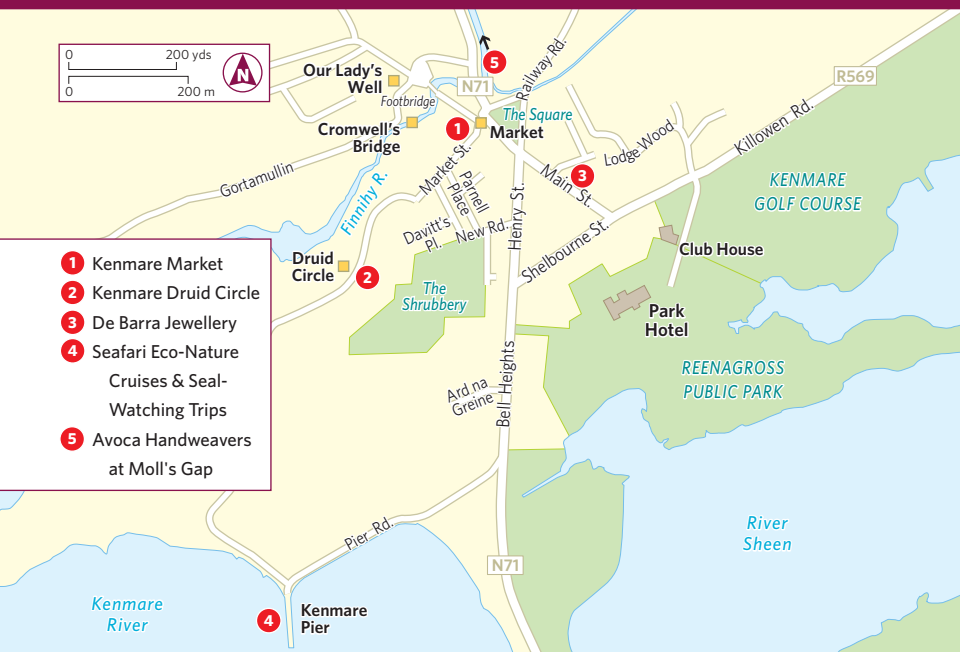


> The demure spire of Holy Cross Church overlooks the colorful shopfronts of Kenmare.

START Main and Market streets.

1 ★★ Kenmare Market. If you're visiting mid-week, be sure to check out this small but lively market held every Wednesday in the market square. The emphasis is on rustic crafts and food produce, in addition to antiques, books, fashion, and general bric-a-brac. Traders can come from as far away as France to sell their wares, although the bulk of what's on offer is locally sourced. We've picked up some fabulous bargains here, so allow yourself time to browse. ⌚ 30 min.

2 ★ Kenmare Druid Circle. An innocuous signpost by the market square leads you up a small hill to this large Bronze Age monument. It has 15 standing stones arranged around a central boulder, which still bears signs—such as circular holes and a shallow dent at the center—of having been used in ceremonies. The circle is magnificently intact for a site that doesn't even appear on some maps. There's no visitor center and no admission fee; it's just sitting in a small paddock, passed by the everyday traffic of life. ⌚ 15 min.



3 ★★ De Barra Jewellery. Having taken over the family jewelry business a couple of years ago, talented young jeweler Shane de Barra has put his own stamp on the merchandise at this small, elegant shop on Kenmare's main street. His freshwater pearl concoctions in silver or gold and his restrained beautiful touch on gold rings and bangles are exceptional. Best of all, prices are reasonable. ⌚ 20 min. Main St., Kenmare. ☎ 064/41867.

4 ★★ Seafari Eco-Nature Cruises & Seal-Watching Trips. This is a good option for families who want to interest their kids in Kenmare Bay. The 2-hour cruise, onboard a 15m (49-ft.) covered boat, crosses 16km (10 miles) narrated by guides well versed in local history and wildlife. Dolphins, sea otters, and gray seals all frolic nearby. Boats depart from the pier next to the Kenmare suspension bridge. Reservations are recommended. ⌚ 3 hr. Kenmare Pier, Kenmare. ☎ 064/42059. www.seafariireland.com. Tickets €25 adults, €18 students, €15 kids 12-18, €13 kids 11 & under. May-Oct 4 cruises daily.

All's Fair

One day of the year Kenmare is no less overrun with visitors than Killarney: August 15, **Fair Day**. This is a working agricultural market, when the streets are taken over by farmers selling all manner of livestock, and a small army of onlookers descends on the town to witness the picturesque congregation. Stalls and other amusements provide fresh food, souvenirs, and even fortunetelling.

5 ★★★ Avoca Handweavers at Moll's Gap. High on a mountain pass (288m/945 ft. above sea level) on the winding road between Killarney and Kenmare, this is the most isolated outpost of the famed County Wicklow weavers. As in all Avoca shops, the stock here features colorful, hand-woven blankets and throws, knitwear, and crafts. The excellent cafe makes a great place for lunch or for afternoon tea and cake. ⌚ 20 min. Ring of Kerry rd. (N71), Moll's Gap, Co. Kerry. ☎ 064/34720. www.avoca.ie. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov-mid-March.

Where to Stay & Dine in Kenmare



> Steam rises off the vitality pool at Park Hotel Kenmare.

★ d'Arcy's Oyster Bar & Grill *SEAFOOD*

In a two-story stone house at the top end of Kenmare, this restaurant has a homey atmosphere with a big open fireplace. The house specialty is Irish oysters, but there are plenty of other seafood options as well. The homemade breads and desserts are also excellent. There are also seven well-appointed rooms upstairs. (€140 for a double). Main St. ☎ 064/41589. www.darcys.ie. Entrees €21–€31. MC, V. Oyster bar: Lunch & dinner daily. Grill: dinner daily.

★★ Lime Tree *MODERN IRISH*

Paintings by local artists line the stone walls of this 1821 landmark renovated schoolhouse. Modern interpretations of classic Irish and European dishes include fillet of beef with horseradish *rösti* and green peppercorn cream, and falafel strudel with yogurt and dill oil.

Shelbourne Rd. ☎ 064/41225. www.limetree-restaurant.com. Entrees €20–€26. MC, V. Apr–Nov dinner daily.

★★★ The Park Hotel

In a palm-tree-lined garden beside Kenmare Bay, this imposing 19th-century building was originally built by the Great Southern Railway for first-class train travelers. It's still a grand, luxury hotel with an impeccably winning and accommodating staff. In the high-ceilinged sitting rooms, fires crackle in open fireplaces and original oil paintings decorate the walls. Guest rooms and communal spaces have exquisite Georgian and Victorian furnishings and waterfront or mountain views. The spa, **Sámas**, makes creative use of the setting. ☎ 064/41200. www.parkkenmare.com. 46 units. Double €364–€606. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Nov 30–Dec 22 and Jan 4–Feb 12.



> *Irish oysters are the speciality at d'Arcy's.*

★★ **Purple Heather** IRISH

This is the place to lunch in Kenmare. Bistro classics take on a gourmet twist: wild smoked salmon or prawn salad, smoked trout pâté, vegetarian omelets, Irish cheese platters, and fresh, homemade soups. Henry St. ☎ 064/41016. www.kenmarerestaurants.com/purpleheather. All items €6–€18. No credit cards. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Sheen Falls Lodge**

Originally the 18th-century home of the earl of Kerry, this resort sits beside a natural waterfall amid vast, sprawling grounds planted with a mixture of smooth lawns and lush gardens. The public areas are decorated in lemony tones with polished woodwork, open fireplaces, and original oil paintings. The bar feels like a drawing room; and the 1,000-volume library, with its green

> *Mouth-watering modern fare at Lime Tree.*

leather sofas and floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, is like an old-fashioned gentlemen's club. Guest rooms are spacious, in rich, contemporary style; each overlooks the falls (stunning when flood-lit at night) or the bay. Self-catering cottages and villas are available for a price. ☎ 064/41600. www.sheenfalls lodge.ie. 66 units. Double €310–€455. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Jan 2–Feb 1.

★★ **Shelburne Lodge** KILLOWEN

This Georgian farmhouse has been transformed into one of the most original, stylish, and comfortable B&Bs in Killowen, a small village just outside Kenmare. Every room has polished wood parquet floors, quality antique furnishings, contemporary art, and a luxurious but homey feel. The guest rooms are all large and gorgeously appointed, and breakfasts are virtually decadent. Cork Rd. Killowen, Co. Kerry. ☎ 064/41013. www.shelburnelodge.com. 9 units. Double €100–€160. MC, V. Closed Dec to mid-Mar.

The Dingle Peninsula

A quieter, shorter alternative to the Ring of Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula loop is an exhilarating, sometimes vertiginous drive full of heart-stopping dips and breathtaking panoramas (acrophobes should avoid the R561 coast road between Milltown and Annascaul). The main draw is obviously the long views, but don't overlook the roadsides, which are strewn with remnants of the past: fragments of a long-disused railway line, a decaying old footway, or a bridle path high up in the mountains. There's history in those hills, and not just the scattered archaeological sites for which the area west of Dingle Town—the Sleah Head Drive—is particularly well known.

START Dingle is 49km (31 miles) southwest of Tralee, on the N86. **TRIP LENGTH** 106km (66 miles).

> Eask Tower on Carhuo Hill.

1 ★★ kids Dingle (An Daingean). Perched on the edge of an incredible stretch of coast, Dingle is a pretty seaside town of winding lanes and sloping hills, tiny boutiques, and multicolored pubs. It's busiest in August, when the **Dingle Races** attract crowds from throughout the area to watch the horses run every other weekend. In the last week of August, the **Dingle Regatta** fills the harbor with traditional Irish wood-frame *currach* boats in a vivid display of color and history. Dingle is also a top destination for families. The town's unofficial mascot is a dolphin called Fungie, who adopted the place years back and has been bringing in the crowds ever since (see p 286). Dingle also has some outstanding pubs famed for their nightly traditional music sessions, including **An Droichead Beag (the Small Bridge)** on Lower Main Street (☎ 066/915-1723) and **O'Flaherty's** on Bridge Street (☎ 066/915-1983).

⌚ 1 day.





- 1 Dingle (An Daingean)
- 2 Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium
- 3 Eask Tower
- 4 Slea Head Drive
- 5 Castlegregory (Caislean an Ghriare)
- 6 Kilmurray Bay

2 ★ kids Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium. This well-designed aquarium contains lots of sea critters in creatively designed tanks. There's a tunnel you can walk through as the fish swim above and around you, and the young staff carry around live starfish, lobsters, and the like, so children can see them up close. ⌚ 1 hr. Dingle Harbour, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-2111. www.dingle-oceanworld.ie. Admission €12 adults, €7 kids. MC, V. Daily 10am-5pm.

3 ★ Eask Tower. Built in 1847 as a famine relief project, this remarkable 12m (39-ft.) tower is built of solid stone nearly 5m (16 ft.) thick, with a wooden arrow pointing to the mouth of the harbor. It is certainly interesting to look at, but the main reason to make the 1.6km (1-mile) climb to the summit of Carhuo Hill isn't the tower but the incredible views of Dingle Harbour, Connor Pass, and, on the far side of the bay, the peaks of the Iveragh Peninsula. ⌚ 20 min. Carhuo Hill, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1850. Tickets €2. Daily 8am-10pm.

4 ★★ Slea Head Drive. A gorgeous stretch of road known for its collection of ancient sites, including the Gallarus Oratory, the Slea Head Drive snakes around the coast at the southwestern edge of the peninsula. At any



> O'Flaherty's (top) and An Droichead Beag (bottom) feature some of the best traditional musicians Ireland has to offer.



Splendid Isolation: Blasket History

A wild outpost of Irish civilization that vanished into history a half century ago, the **Blasket Islands** (Na Blascaodaí) are a bleak, haunting sight off the coast of the Dingle peninsula. Nobody knows when or why the Blaskets were first settled, but the name is likely Viking in origin (*brasker* being ancient Norse for “place of danger”). Visiting Spanish sailors wrote of meeting native people there in the mid-16th century, but there could have been a settled community on Great Blasket for centuries prior.

The islanders had a rich tradition of storytelling and folklore; several writers who are immensely important to the canon of Gaelic literature came from the Blaskets. Because of strict British education laws, however, island children studied only in English, meaning that most of them were not able to read or write in their native tongue. Recording these stories for posterity fell to the anthropologists and writers who flocked here in the late 1800s with an enthusiasm bordering on the evangelical. A few islanders subsequently learned how to write in Gaelic; some penned significant works in later life, including **Peig Sayers** (1873–1958), whose grim memoirs have long been required reading in Irish high schools.

By the early 1800s, the population was thought to number around 150, but by the 1950s the community was in terminal decline,

as fewer young locals remained willing to continue the traditional way of life off the mainland. In 1953, the Irish government ordered a mandatory evacuation, citing safety concerns after a storm prevented doctors from reaching a sick young islander in time to prevent his death. Some chose to relocate all the way to America; many settled in Springfield, Massachusetts, where a few still live.

Today Great Blasket is the only inhabited island of the six principal Blaskets—**Great Blasket Island** (An Blascaod Mór), **Beginish** (Beiginis), **Inishnabro** (Inis na Bró), **Inishvickillane** (Inis Mhic Uileáin), **Inishtooskert** (Inis Tuaisceart), and **Tearaght Island** (An Tiaracht). Even there, a few crumbling buildings and skeletal edifices are all that remain. The main attraction is the eerie, ghost town–like atmosphere in an outstandingly beautiful setting. A stunning 13km (8-mile) walking route stretches to the west end of the island and back, passing sea cliffs and beaches of ivory sand. Great Blasket is heaven for bird-watchers, with its many rare nesting seabirds. You can pick up maps and other information from the Blasket Centre, back on the mainland in Dunquin (066/915-6444). **Blasket Island Ferries** (066/915-6422. www.blasketisland.com) in Dunquin runs ferries to the island with or without guided tours.



> *The ruins of Minard Castle still stand watch over Kilmurray Bay.*

tourist information center, you can grab a guide to the various ruined abbeys and old forts along the way. (**Note:** This is serious Gaeltacht territory, so under new Irish rules, all signs—even road hazard signs—are in Irish only.) For a minitour of Sleah Head Dr., see p 261.

Back in Dingle, take Spa Road northeast (left off Main St.) through Ballybowler, Glashanacuirp, Ballyhoneen, and Kilcummin. After Farrantoolen, turn left up through Kiliney, Ballingowan and Farrantaun, to Castlegregory. 24.5km (15.2 miles).

5 ★★ Castlegregory (Caislean an Ghriare). A seaside village with two wide, sandy beaches, Castlegregory is known for its good diving waters, and scuba divers and watersports fans flock to the place in summer. Isolationists are better off in tiny **Cloghane** (An Clochán), a

smaller, quieter beach town on the southern edge of Brandon Bay. ☉ 2 hr. See also p 261.

Take the R560 southeast. Turn left onto the N86 at Camp Cross to Anascaul, then left onto the R561. At Gurteen, turn right onto the country road through Doorah and Acres. Minard is after Kilmurry. 32.3km (20.8 miles).

6 ★★ Kilmurray Bay. Giant sandstone boulders form this beach in the shadow of Minard Castle, looking quite unlike anything you've ever seen. It's definitely not safe for swimming but ideal for a picnic. A similarly magical phenomenon occurs at nearby **Trabeg Beach**, where, during ebb tide, you will find exquisite wave-sculpted, maroon sandstone shapes below sheer rock cliffs and small sea caves lined with veins of crystalline quartz. ☉ 1 hr. Kilmurray is off the N86, about 13km (8 miles) east of Dingle.

Where to Stay & Dine in Dingle



> *The Mount Eagle Suite at Dingle Skellig Hotel.*

★ **An Cafe Liteartha** CAFE/TEAROOM

"The Literary Cafe" is a self-service cafe in an excellent bookstore. It's heaven for those interested in Irish history, literature, maps, and . . . scones. Light lunches and snacks are on offer, including soups, salads, seafood, and delicious cakes. It's an ideal spot for a quiet lunch or snack in the middle of town. Dykegate St., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-2204. All items €3–€6. No credit cards. Dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ **Ashe's Seafood Bar** SEAFOOD

Behind Ashe's nautical-looking 19th-century pub façade lies one of the best seafood restaurants in the region. Start with the seafood chowder—it has built up quite a following among regular visitors—then move on to a perfectly prepared tempura of Pollock, or seared scallops with caper and herb butter. The lobster is served about as fresh as can be, straight out of the restaurant's own tank. Reservations are required. Main St., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-0989. www.ashesseafoodbar.com. Entrees €16–€30. MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat; dinner Sun Jul–Aug only.

Benners Hotel

The lovely Georgian doorway with a fanlight at the front entrance sets the tone for this old-world hostelry—one of the few hotels open year-round, right in the heart of town. The 250-year-old hotel blends traditional Irish charm with modern comforts. Its style is a bit old-fashioned, but rooms are comfortable and furnished with antiques,

including some four-poster beds. Main St., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1638. www.dinglebenners.com. 52 units. €145–€230 double. AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **The Captain's House**

Jim and Mary Milhench own and run this dapper little B&B in the middle of Dingle. The name is inspired less by the location (the house is landlocked, except for a river running through the manicured yard) than by Jim's former career as a sea captain. It's a friendly place—when you arrive, you're offered tea with scones or a slice of rich cake, and they make you feel genuinely welcome. Rooms are on the small side, but returning guests often ask specifically to stay in room no. 10, which is tucked under the gables and has a sloping ceiling. The Mall, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1531. www.homepage.tinet.ie/~captigh. 8 units. Double €100–€110. AE, MC, V.

★★ **The Chart House** MODERN COUNTRY

Be sure to book ahead for a table at this popular restaurant with an inviting bistro atmosphere, lots of polished pine, and warm, rose-colored walls. The cooking is an ambitious blend of Irish dishes and outside influences. Main courses might include steak filet with black pudding mash or pork with brandied apples. With unusual food and excellent service, it has carved out quite a reputation. The Mall, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-2255. <http://thecharthousedingle.com>. Entrees €15–€28. MC, V. Dinner Wed–Mon.



> Lunch and literature at *An Cafe Liteartha*.



> Attention to detail at the *Chart House*.

★ **kids Dingle Skellig Hotel**

This three-story hotel has an idyllic location next to Dingle Bay on the eastern edge of town. Most guest rooms are done in neutral colors with floral touches, although some have slightly lurid color combinations. Many have gorgeous views. This is a family hotel in the classic sense—in the summer, there are evening cabaret performances and children's entertainment. Annascaul Rd., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-0200. Fax 066/915-1501. www.dingleskellig.com. 111 units. Double €250–€300. AE, MC, V.

★★ **Greenmount House**

Deceptively utilitarian from the outside, this small hotel overlooking Dingle is a stylish, modern place. Each of the spacious guest rooms has its own sitting area and large bathroom, and some have balconies. John St., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1414. www.greenmount-house.com. 12 units. Double €100–€160. MC, V.

Lord Bakers SEAFOOD/PUB FARE

You can dine at this pub-restaurant by a stone fireplace amid old alcoves or in the sunny conser-

vatory with Art Deco touches. The menu includes standard bar food as well as crab claws in garlic butter, Kerry oysters, and steaks. Dinner specialties are more elegant, including sole stuffed with smoked salmon in cheese sauce, lobster, and rack of lamb. Reservations are recommended for dinner. Main St., Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1277. Bar food €10–€16; dinner entrees €16–€30. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Fri–Wed.

★ **Pax Guest House**

On a green hill overlooking Dingle Bay, Pax Guest House's sunny balcony takes in sweeping views as far as Sleah Head. Owners Ron and Joan Brosnan-Wright have transformed a former retirement home into a comfortable B&B. Some rooms have four-poster beds, and the decor is bright and cheerful. For breakfast, Joan makes artisan breads (the white almond bread is delicious) to go with the usual egg and meat options. This place is a peaceful getaway. Signposted on the N86, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1518. www.pax-house.com. 12 units. Double €120–€160. MC, V.

County Kerry with Kids

With Ireland's most developed tourist industry, Kerry affords a wealth of things to do with little ones in tow. Many of the top sites revolve around things that swim, trot, or fly; both the Kenmare-based Seafari and the endlessly popular Fungie tours in Dingle take you up close to see dolphins in their natural habitat. Horse-drawn buggy tours of Killarney National Park elicit squeals of delight from younger children, and they're an entertaining way for grown-ups to see the park, too. More intrepid kids will be thoroughly entertained by a trip into the ethereal underground chambers of Crag Cave.



> Kids of the human variety can frolic with the other kind at Kennedy's Pet Farm.

START Kenmare, on the N71. TRIP LENGTH 140km (87 miles).

1 ★★ Seafari (Kenmare). Seafari's eco-nature cruises and seal-watching trips are a good option for families who want to give the kids a break from museums. The 2-hour cruises on a 15m (49-ft.) boat are narrated by guides well versed in local history and wildlife, including dolphins, sea otters, and gray seals that frolic nearby. Boats depart from the pier next to the Kenmare suspension bridge. Reservations are recommended. ⌚ 2 hr. in high season; 3 hr. in low season. Kenmare Pier, Kenmare. ☎ 064/42059. www.seafariireland.com. For more information see p 275.

Take the R569 out of Kenmare, turning left onto the N22 at Clonkeen. Glenflesk is 5km (3 miles) down this road. 30km (19 miles).

2 ★ Kennedy's Pet Farm (Killarney). This 30-hectare (74-acre) dairy and sheep farm is surrounded by mountain vistas. Kids can watch cows being milked, piglets being fed, and peacocks strutting their stuff. Horse-drawn machinery is on display, and it's all good rural fun. ⌚ 1 hr. Glenflesk, Killarney. ☎ 064/54054. www.killarneypetfarm.com. Tickets €8. Price includes pony ride for kids. Feb–Oct daily 10am–5pm. 9.7km (6 miles) east of Killarney, off the main Cork rd. (N22).

Continue up the N22 for about 1.5km (1 mile). Turn left at Curraglass and take the small country road through Shronaboy, Rossalia, and Coolies. At the junction with the N71, turn left and follow signs for Muckcross House. 12km (7½ miles).



> Seafari's family-friendly boat cruise of Kenmare Bay departs from the pier.



Fungie the Dingle Dolphin

The story of Fungie is strange and heart-warming. The bottlenose dolphin was first spotted by Dingle's lighthouse keeper in 1984, as it escorted fishing boats out to sea and then back again at the end of their voyages day after day. The sailors named him, and he became a harbor fixture. Fishermen took their children out to swim with him, and he seemed to love human contact. Now people come from miles around to have a few minutes' time with Fungie, and the fishermen ferry them out to meet him. Trips last about an hour and depart roughly every 2 hours in low season and as often as every half-hour in high season. Fungie swims right up to the boats, which stay out long enough to afford views of the picturesque bay. Wonderful though this tour can be for kids, however, one does have to wonder how much longer Fungie will be drawing crowds. He's been at it for 25 years—and nobody knows quite how old he is. At this writing we understand he's as hale and hearty as ever—but perhaps it would be wise to call ahead first. Discreetly. The Pier, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-2626. Tour starts at €16 adults, €8 kids 11 & under. Daily 10am–6pm, weather permitting.

3 ★★ **Killarney National Park.** One of the most persistent and charming features of the Killarney landscape are the quaint **horse-driven buggies**—known as “jaunting cars” or “jarveys”—that constantly clip-clop down the lanes around the lakes of Killarney National

Park. Apart from the fact that kids seem to be enthralled by the idea of getting anywhere by horse, it's also a pretty good way to cover ground in the park, given that cars are not allowed. The price depends on the destinations, which include Ross Castle, Muckross House & Gardens, Torc Waterfall, Muckross Abbey, Dinis Island, and Kate Kearney's Cottage, gateway to the Gap of Dunloe. To hire a buggy at the park near Muckross House or arrange a tour in advance, contact **Tangney Tours**, 10B Muckross Close, Killarney (☎ 064/33358; www.killarneyjauntingcars.com). ⌚ 2 hr.

Take the N71 to Killarney. Pass through the town, continuing north on the N22. Then take the N23 to Castleisland. 31km (19 miles).

4 ★ **Crag Cave (Castleisland).** Believed to be more than a million years old, these limestone caverns, discovered in 1983, are open for wandering via a half-hour long guided tour past massive stalactites and fascinating caverns. There's a children's play area and a cafe on site. ⌚ 30 min. Castleisland. ☎ 066/714-1244. www.cragcave.com. Tickets €12 adults, €8 seniors and students, €5 kids 15 & under. Mid-Mar to Oct 31 daily 10am–5:30pm (6pm July–Aug). Off Limerick rd. (N21), 24km (15 miles) from Killarney.

Take the N21 west out of Castleisland toward Tralee. 18km (11 miles).

5 ★ **Tralee.** Despite its singsong name, Tralee is a workaday place, but it still has its share of sites likely to appeal to youngsters. **Kerry the Kingdom** (Ashe Memorial Hall, Denny St.; ☎ 066/712-7777) is a sort of super visitor center—a large facility designed to provide an in-depth look at 7,000 years of life in County Kerry. There are supersize historic displays, a film, and mannequins in period garb. There's also the **Kerry County Museum**, which chronologically examines Kerry music, history, legends, archaeology, and, last but not least, soccer. Interactive and hands-on exhibits include special lighting effects and a theme park-style ride to “take you back in time.” Tickets cost €8 adults, €5 children. It's open Tuesday to Saturday 9:30am to 5:30pm (reduced hours out of season). Another kid-friendly crowd pleaser in Tralee is the restored **steam train** that rolls for a short but scenic 3km (1¾ miles) from Tralee's Ballyard Station



> One of the largest cave systems in Ireland, Crag Cave has 3.81 km (2.37 miles) of stalagmites and stalactites.

to Blennerville. Tickets cost €5 adults, €2.50 children. (**Note:** Near the end of every month, the trains are off-track and serviced for a day or two; call ☎ 066/712-1064 to check before you go.) ⌚ 3 hr.

Take the N86 southwest to Dingle. 49km (31 miles).

6 ★★ **Dingle.** Head straight down to the seafront in Dingle, and you'll find two of the region's best attractions for kids within a short walk of each other. **Fungie the Dolphin Tours** (p 286) have been running from the Pier since 1984, when local fishermen noticed the incredibly friendly wild dolphin who lived in the bay and loved the company of people. A mini-industry has grown around taking visitors out to say hello. **Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium** (p 279) is a compact, hands-on, interactive kind of aquarium. You can walk through a glass tunnel while fish swim above and around you, and members of the young staff carry around live lobsters, crabs, starfish, and other creatures and introduce them up close to kids. ⌚ 2hrs. (1 hr. each site).

To return to Kenmare, take the N86 up to Tralee. Take the N21 east out of town, the N22 south to Killarney, then the N71 down to Kenmare. 116km (72 miles).



> The aquarium tunnel is a highlight of the small but entertaining Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium.

The Best Hikes in County Kerry

County Kerry encompasses some of the best hiking territory in Ireland. Killarney National Park, for instance, achieves a near-perfect balance between planned, well-manicured trails of no more than a mile or two in length, and wild, isolated territory where one can quickly find seclusion. If you're feeling ambitious, try one of Kerry's outstanding long-distance hiking trails, including the Dingle Way and the Kerry Way. Both are for serious walkers but have enough shorter sections that even moderately fit trekkers can handle them in a day.



> *The Dingle Way takes a hiker past the ruins of an old church in Cloghane.*

Dingle & Sciúird Archaeological Adventures.

For real history buffs, these tours are a great opportunity to get deeper insight into the ancient history of Dingle. Led by a local historian, they last about a half-day and involve a short bus journey and some easy walking. Four or five monuments, from the Stone Age to medieval times, are on the route. All tours, limited to 8 to 10 people, start from the top of the pier. Reservations are required. ☉ Half-day. Holy Ground, Dingle. ☎ 066/915-1606. €20 per person. May–Sept daily 10:30am and 2pm.

Kerry Way. This low, long-distance path traverses the extraordinary scenery of the Ring of Kerry. Ireland's longest marked hiking trail, the 202km (126-mile) route follows several "green roads" (old, unused roads built as make-work famine relief projects and now converted into walking paths). Maps outlining the route are available from the Killarney and Kenmare tourist offices (some are free, though the better ones cost a couple of euros). ☉ 1–9 days. For more information see www.kerryway.net.



> The Reask Stone, one of the monuments you may see on Sciuird Archaeological Adventures.

*****Killarney National Park.** With its lakeside and forest trails, Killarney National Park is prime territory for walkers of all levels of skill and ambition. The **Mossy Woods Nature Trail** starts from Muckcross Lake and rambles through a gentle 2km (1¼-mile) path of yew trees and moss-carpeted woodland. Along this trail you'll see several arbutus, or strawberry trees—something of a geographical oddity, in that they're common around Killarney but found almost nowhere else in Northern Europe. Dedicated walkers will more likely be enticed by the **Torc Mountain Walk**, with its spectacular views of the Killarney Lakes and the nearby **Macgillycuddy's Reeks** mountain range (see below). Starting at the **Torc Waterfall** parking lot, about 6km (3¾miles) south of Killarney, the whole trip is just under 10km (6¼ miles), takes about 4 hours, and is moderately difficult. Information and maps for all trails can be obtained from the park's visitor center at Muckcross House. For more about the park, see chapter 7.

Macgillycuddy's Reeks. This marvelously named range of mountains just west of Killarney is beautiful to look at—they were formed of red sandstone that was gradually



> *The Dingle Way is a popular trail with hikers for its variety of landscapes.*

shaved down by glaciers until they reached the gentle shape they hold today. They were named after an ancient clan that once predominated in this area—the Mac Gilla Machudas. “Reek” is an old Irish term for a peaked hill. They’re crossed by several small roads, the most scenic of which is the **Gap of Dunloe**. Views are exceptional, but don’t expect much in the way of isolation—it’s also the route taken by the popular “jarvey” horse and buggy rides. We suggest you start by picking up maps and other information at the park visitor center in **Muckross House**, which is on the N71 6km



> *Kerry’s walking trails are well marked and serviced but can be arduous; even experienced hikers should come prepared.*

(3¼ miles) south of Killarney town center (☎ 064/31440; www.killarneynationalpark.ie). Every week from April to October, the **Kenmare Walking Club** mounts scheduled hiking trips in the area, many of which cover the Reeks. These are mostly aimed at serious hikers (you’ll be expected to bring appropriate supplies), although some follow gentler routes. See www.kenmarewalking.com for details.

Tralee & the Dingle Way. Starting in Tralee and working its way across the Dingle Peninsula, the Dingle Way covers 153km (95 miles) of gorgeous mountain and coastal landscape. The most rugged section is along Brandon Head, where the trail passes between Mount Brandon and the ocean. The views are tremendous, but the walk is long (about 24km/15 miles, averaging 9 hr) and strenuous and should be attempted only by experienced walkers in good weather. The section between Dunquin and Ballyferrier (also 24km/15 miles) follows an especially lovely stretch of coast. ⌚ 9 hr. For more information see *The Dingle Way Map Guide*, available in local tourist offices and shops.

County Kerry Fast Facts

Tip: For “Fast Facts” in Killarney, see p 251.

Arriving

BY BUS Bus Éireann (☎ 064/34777; www.buseireann.ie) runs service daily to Dingle from all parts of Ireland. The boarding and drop-off point is on Upper Main Street. **BY TRAIN** See Killarney. **BY CAR** See Killarney. **BY PLANE Aer Arann** (☎ 061/704428; www.aerarann.ie) flies from Dublin into Kerry County Airport, Farranfore, County Kerry (☎ 066/976-4644; www.kerryairport.ie), about 16km (10 miles) north of Killarney. **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) flies from London (Stansted) to Kerry.

ATMs/Cashpoints

In Kenmare, cash machines cluster at the foot of the main street, near the park. Dingle has a couple on its main shopping street, and Tralee has several in the town square. Other cash machines are rare.

Currency Exchange

Large hotels will change money for you, as will large banks in Killarney and Tralee and at the airport.

Dentists & Doctors

In a medical emergency, dial ☎ 999. **DOCTORS** Try the **Kenmare Health Centre** on New Road, Kenmare (☎ 064/42324), or **The Medical Centre** on The Mall, Dingle (☎ 066/915-2225).

DENTISTS Try **Con O’Leary** on The Square, Kenmare (☎ 064/42621), or **Linda Corkery-Johnson** on Upper Main Street, Dingle (☎ 066/915-2333).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ 999 for police, ambulance, or fire emergencies.

Internet

Try the **Dingle Internet Café**, Main Street, Dingle (☎ 066/915-2478), or **Talknet**, 38 Bridge St., Tralee (☎ 066/719-4766).

Pharmacies

In Kenmare, try **Brosnan’s Pharmacy**, Henry Street (☎ 064/41318). In Dingle, try **O’Keeffe Pharmacy**, Strand Street (☎ 066/915-1310).

Police

The national police (Garda) emergency number is ☎ 999 or **112**. The **Killarney Garda Station** is on New Road (☎ 064/31222). The **Dingle Garda Station** is at Holy Ground (☎ 066/915-1522).

Post Office

In Kenmare, the main Post Office (An Post) is on Henry Street (☎ 064/41207); in Dingle, Main Street (☎ 066/915-1661).

Taxis

For local taxi or minibus service in Dingle, contact **John Sheehy** (☎ 066/915-1301). In Tralee, call **Kingdom Cabs**, Boherbee (☎ 066/712-7828), or **Tralee Radio Cabs**, Monavelley (☎ 066/712-5451).

Toilets

Public toilets are very rare in this part of the country. You’ll find some at the tourist offices, in airports, at train and bus stations, and at museums, aquariums, and other major tourist attractions.

Visitor Information

The **Kenmare Tourist Office**, Market Square, Kenmare (☎ 064/41233), is open daily Easter through September, with extended hours in July and August. The rest of the year (Oct–Easter), it’s open Monday to Saturday. **The Dingle Tourist Office** is on Main Street, Dingle (☎ 066/915-1188). It is open seasonally, mid-April through October, Monday to Saturday 9am to 5pm (extended and Sunday hours in peak summer season). For more information see www.kerry-tourism.com or www.dingle-peninsula.ie.





9 Galway City



Favorite Moments in Galway City

Artsy, affluent Galway, between the Atlantic and Lough Corrib, is the most sophisticated city on Ireland's west coast. With a population of 70,000, this former fishing village is youthful, buzzing, and cultured, enlivened by quirky art galleries, colorful shops, and spirited nightlife. It's also pretty easy to get around; besides a couple of hotels in the burbs, there's little reason to leave the town center, with its pristine Medieval Quarter, easily explored on foot.



➤ **PREVIOUS PAGE** Griffin's has been a Galway family bakery since 1876. **THIS PAGE** Explore the colorful shops of the city's thriving Medieval Quarter.

Getting lost in the Medieval Quarter. We love to head out to this artsy district, dash down some unsigned winding lane where the sunlight is shining on a doorway just so, and find ourselves suddenly lost. It's a tiny, tangled area, so we get our bearings quickly, but getting lost is half the fun of going there. See p 297.

Checking out the latest exhibition at the Galway Arts Centre. This small arts center always has something happening. By day it hosts exhibitions of innovative works by Irish artists; at night there are plays, readings, and

performances. It's a great place to meet locals and get a feel for the town. See p 297.

Picking up souvenirs in Eyre Square. Our favorite place to shop for gifts is the warren of little shops between Eyre Square and the Medieval Quarter. We've found sky-blue, handmade pottery, silky soft wool scarves, and individually carved wooden bowls to bring back to family and friends—or to keep for ourselves. See p 296.

A drink at An Pucan. During the day at this quiet local pub, you'll find at least as many regulars speaking Irish as English. By night

Getting lost in the

Medieval Quarter **9**

Checking out the latest exhibition
at the Galway Arts Centre **11**

Picking up souvenirs **3**

A drink at An Pucan **1**

Ferry to the Aran Islands **2**

Looking for gold at

Hartmann & Sons **5**

Exploring the antiques at
the Winding Stair **6**

Buying sweaters at the

Galway Woollen Market **7**

Breakfast at G.B.C. **4**

Taking in a show at
the Druid Theatre **10**

Having a pint at

Séhan Ua Neáchtain **8**

Picnicking on the

beach in Spiddal **12**



there's often music in the corner and a more lively crowd at the bar. It's great for people-watching. See p 299.

Ferry to the Aran Islands. On a crisp, sunny fall day, when the water is smooth, we love to take in the views of the countryside from the water and then spend the day hiking around the islands and picnicking in the peace and quiet. See p 301.

Looking for gold at Hartmann & Son. You could spend hours in this shop trying on the Claddagh rings, checking out the latest designs, and ultimately settling on something unusual and not too expensive. See p 305.

Exploring the antiques at the Winding Stair. With its creaky stairs and room after room of historic detritus, from the sublime to the ridiculous, this is a treasure-trove of curiosities, most of them far too big to bring home. You could spend hours opening and closing desks, perching anxiously on 100-year-old chairs, and admiring pieces of silver. See p 304.

Buying sweaters at the Galway Woollen Market. Whenever we travel to Ireland in the winter, we pick up a couple of chunky, white Aran sweaters. Water rolls off them like a

duck's back, they're as warm as a thick coat, and they look marvelously nautical. There's nothing like them anywhere else in the world. See p 306.

Breakfast at G.B.C. When we weary of eggs and bacon or packaged cereals, we'll skip breakfast at the B&B and come to the Galway Bakery Company instead for good coffee and freshly made muffins and rolls. There we'll read over the local paper and plan our day before heading out. See p 309.

Taking in a show at the Druid Theatre. This theater takes such an innovative approach to portraying Irish culture, it gives you a new perspective on Irish folklore and life. The crew is immensely talented, and the slate of plays and performances is always surprising and entertaining. See p 314.

Having a pint at Séhan Ua Neáchtain. The ideal finish to a long day of sightseeing is a pint of ale or short glass of whiskey here. See p 313.

Picnicking on the beach in Spiddal. This is only a fun thing to do in the summer on a sunny day. Gorgeous views, clear water, and lots of beach to explore. Heaven. See p 302.

Galway City in 1 Day

Galway is compact and user-friendly—ideal for lazy wandering and people-watching. From **Eyre Square**, the heart of town, you're just a few blocks to the noble **Medieval Quarter** or to the best small galleries and museums in Ireland's unofficial arts capital. Start with the **Galway Arts Centre**, the finest and most versatile of this town's many bastions of creativity. Just don't pressure yourself to do too much; we'd rather you forgo a stop or two on this itinerary than forfeit an afternoon spent watching the world go by in a pub or cafe.



> *Buskers, or street musicians, are a familiar site in Ireland's unofficial arts capital.*

START Eyre Square, at the junction of Queen Street, Prospect Hill, Shop Street, and Forster Street.

1 ★ Eyre Square. This town square surrounded by shops and businesses is the hub of the city. It's pronounced "Air Square," but it's officially the John F. Kennedy Park, in commemoration of the American president's visit here in 1963, a few months before his assassination. (The 35th U.S. president's bust overlooks the square.) It's a popular place where locals meet, and it's a handy landmark for you as you find your way around town. ⌚ 15 min. At the junction of Queen St., Prospect Hill, Shop St. and Forster St.

2 ★ Lynch's Castle. Dating from 1490 and renovated in the 19th century, this impressive structure was once home to the Lynch family, who ruled the city for many years. It's one of the oldest medieval town houses in Ireland and is now a branch of the Allied Irish Bank. The stern exterior is watched over by a handful of amusing gargoyles; inside is a small display telling the building's history. ⌚ 10 min. Abbeygate St. and Shop St. Free admission. Mon–Fri 10am–4pm (5pm Thurs).

3 ★★ St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church. Galway's oldest church, named after Saint Nick, was first built in 1320, and it houses a



12th-century crusader's tomb. If you call ahead, you can arrange a guided history tour. ⌚ 1 hr. if you take the tour; 20 min. otherwise. Lombard St. ☎ 091/564648. Free admission (donations accepted). Mid-Apr to Sept Mon-Sat 9am-5:45pm, Sun 1-5:45pm; Oct to mid-Apr Mon-Sat 10am-4pm, Sun 1-5pm.

④ ★★ **The Medieval Quarter.** The small winding lanes around Quay Street act as Galway's Left Bank, lined with boutiques and funky cafes. It also encompasses the remains of **Blake's Castle**, a 17th-century fortified tower house; the historic Fishmarket area; and Kirwan's Lane, one of Galway's few surviving medieval streets. ⌚ 1 hr. Quay St., Kirwan's Lane, and Flood St.

⑤ 🍷 **McDonagh's.** This rambling establishment at the edge of the Medieval Quarter is divided into a smart restaurant, a fresh fish market, and a fish and chips cafe. Head to the latter, and order yourself a plate of cod and chips. It's delicious on a rainy day. ⌚ 1 hr. 22 Quay St. ☎ 091/565809. \$.

⑥ ★ **Galway City Museum.** An entertaining introduction to the area, this little museum holds a fine collection of local historical documents, art, photographs, city memorabilia, and medieval remnants. ⌚ 1 hr. Off Spanish Arch. ☎ 091/567641. Free admission. June-Sept daily 10am-5pm; Oct-May Tues-Sat 10am-5pm.

⑦ ★ **Galway Arts Centre.** Once the home of Lady Gregory, Ireland's most famous arts patron, this town house has an excellent program of historic displays, as well as exhibitions of works by Irish artists, concerts, and other performances. We pop in here whenever we're in town to see what's going on. ⌚ 45 min. 47 Dominic St. ☎ 091/565886. Free admission. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm.

⑧ **kids Medieval Banquet at Dunguaire.** After a rest, drive or take a taxi about 26km (16 miles) out of town to the splendid 16th-century Dunguaire Castle, where medieval banquets take place in the summer. You'll dine on medieval cuisine and drink wine made by ancient methods. The mood is boisterous and the city magnificent. It's a great way to end your first day in Galway. Reserve a seat in advance. ⌚ 3 hr. On the N67 near Kinvara. ☎ 061/361511. May-Sept daily 5:30 and 8:45pm.

Galway City in 2 Days

Start your second day with a shopping spree at the Galway Irish Crystal Centre. Then we recommend a poke around the city's best shopping district, around Eyre Square and the Medieval Quarter. In the afternoon, take in the spangled beauty of Galway Bay on a Corrib Princess cruise.



> Galway's thrice annual horse races are world-renowned, attracting gamblers and revelers dressed to the nines.

START **Dublin road (R338).**

1 ★ Galway Irish Crystal Centre. You can while away quite a bit of time at this crystal-making center. You can watch the craftsmen at work—blowing, shaping, and hand-cutting the country's trademark glassware—and then go shop for the perfect pieces to take back home. Glass-making demonstrations are continuous on weekdays, and there's a restaurant where you can relax if all that sparkle starts to get to you. ⌚ 1 hr. East of the city on the main Dublin rd. (R338). ☎ 091/757311. Free admission. MC, V. Year-round Mon–Fri 9am–5:30pm; Sat 10am–5:30pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

2 ★★ Shopping for souvenirs. Pick up some souvenirs and soak up the local ambience in the shopping area between Eyre Square and the Medieval Quarter. Look for handmade linens and lace at **Twice as Nice** (5 Quay St.), buy Claddagh rings at **Fallers** (Williamsgate St.), and get a variety of handmade crafts—including woodwork, jewelry, and glass—at **Design Concourse** (Kirwin's Lane). ⌚ 1½ hr. Quay St., Williamsgate St., and Kirwan's Lane. See p 304 for these and more stores.

3 ★ Nora Barnacle House. This restored 19th-century terrace house was once the home of Nora Barnacle, who would later



become the wife of James Joyce. It's filled with memorabilia, including letters, photographs, and other exhibits on the Joyces' lives and their connection with Galway. ⌚ 1 hr. Bowling Green. ☎ 091/564743. Admission €2.50 adults; €2 seniors, students, and kids. Mid-May to mid-Sept Mon-Sat 10am-5pm (closed for lunch), and by appointment.

④ 🍷 **Busker Brownes.** Grab a sandwich, some pasta, or a salad at a reasonable price here. This is a favorite of locals and travelers for its funky decor and its good, down-to-earth cooking. ⌚ 1 hr. Upper Cross St. ☎ 091/563377. \$.

⑤ ★★ **Cruise the bay on the Corrib Princess.** Sit back and take in the view from this 157-passenger, two-deck boat. The journey along the River Corrib takes in castles, historical sites, and assorted wildlife. The relaxing environment onboard includes a bar and snack service. Buy tickets at the dock or at the tourist office. ⌚ 2 hr. Galway Quays. ☎ 091/592447. €15 adults, €13 seniors and students, €8 kids, €35 families. May-June and Sept daily 2:30 and 4:30pm; July-Aug daily 12:30 and 4:30pm.

Galway Races

The local racetrack is the subject of fable and song in Galway, where horse racing dates back to the 13th century. Horse lovers and high rollers still pour in from around the country for the Galway Races in July, September, and October. The animals are the best around, and the atmosphere is electric. Admission is €20 to €35, depending on the event and day of the week. ⌚ 3 hr. Ballybrit. ☎ 091/753870. www.galwayraces.com.

If You Have 3 Days or More

We recommend day trips to the Aran Islands (p 300), Yeats Country (p 356), or Spiddal & Salthill (p 302).

⑥ ★★ **An Pucan.** Traditional music is performed nightly after 9pm at this quintessentially Irish pub—complete with Irish-speaking regulars. It's just a block from Eyre Square. ⌚ 2 hr. 11 Forster St. ☎ 091/561528.

Aran Islands Day Trip

When you see the ghostly shapes of the islands floating 48km (30 miles) out at sea like misty Brigadoon, you instantly understand why the sea-battered and wind-whipped Aran Islands have been the subject of fable, song, and film for thousands of years. The islands—Inis Mór (Inishmore), Inis Meain (Inishmaan), and Inis Oirr (Inisheer)—are outposts of Gaelic culture and language, and have lovely, deeply isolated landscapes. Inishmore is the most popular island, the easiest to access, and the best to explore on a day trip from Galway.



> *The Aran Islands loom large in Irish lore, as seen in the 1934 fictional documentary Man of Aran.*

START **Victoria Place, Galway City (for Aran Island Ferries).**

1 Ionad Arann. This heritage and visitor center in the village of Kilronan on Inishmore (where the planes land and the ferries dock) is the best place to start any exploration of the islands. It explores their history and culture, harsh landscape, and Iron Age forts. You can pick up

walking maps, get a sandwich and a cup of coffee, ask questions, and generally get yourself going here. Kilronan. ☎ 099/61355. www.visitaran-islands.com. April–May and Sept–Oct daily 11am to 5pm; June–Aug daily 10am to 7pm. Admission €4.50 adults, €3 students, €2.50 seniors and children, €9.25 families. Discounted combination tickets to the center and film are available.



> A horse-drawn carriage at Dún Aengus on Inishmore.

2 ★★ Inishmore. All the islands are physically unusual, surrounded by a ring of rocks while their interiors are blanketed in soft green grass and wildflowers. It's great for walkers. The most dramatic landscape is on the western side, where cliffs plummet into the dizzying sea froth below.

3 ★★ Dún Aengus. A vast, 2,000-year-old stone fortress on Inishmore, this fort is perched on the edge of a cliff that drops 90m (295 ft.)

Aran Go Bragh

Aran Island Ferries runs daily service to all three islands. In summer, boats leave from Galway Dock; otherwise, they leave from Rossaveal in Connemara, 37km (23 miles) west of the city. From either launch the crossing takes 40 minutes. You can also fly **Aer Arann Islands** (☎ 091/593034; www.aerarannislands.ie) from Connemara Airport, 29km (18 miles) west of Galway City (flights are 10 min.; tickets are €45). Aran Island Ferries, Victoria Place (off Eyre Sq.), Galway. N091/568903. www.aranislandferries.com. Nov–Mar daily 10:30am and 6pm; Apr–Oct daily 10:30am, 1pm, and 6pm.

to the sea. Its original purpose is unknown—some think it was a military structure, others say it was a ceremonial theater. From the top, there are spectacular views of Galway Bay, the Burren, and Connemara. You can pick up a detailed map to the fort from the visitor center in Kilronan. **No opening hours or admission charge.**

Spiddal & Salthill

Day Trip

This scenic drive takes you west along the coast into Connemara. The road winds along the edge of the headland through a landscape that is largely flat and follows the rocky shore. It's fairly short, but there's a broad variety of things to see and do along the way: You'll be venturing into the Gaeltacht, where signs are posted in Irish and you'll hear less English spoken. You can wander the Salthill boardwalk, stroll fine beaches, haggle for pottery and woollens at the Spiddal Craft Village, and then either fish for trout or ride horseback along the beach or through the rocky hillsides.



➤ Boaters and paddlers set out on Galway Bay from Salthill's traditional seaside resort.

START Salthill is on the R336, 3.5km (2 miles) west of central Galway. **TRIP LENGTH** 58.6 km (36 miles).

1 kids Salthill. The first stop along the way is this busy, unromantic beach resort (*Bóthar na Trá* in Irish). Reminiscent of the New Jersey shore in the U.S. or Blackpool in England, it's an Irish family favorite in summer. It has a

boardwalk and fine beach, plus lots of bars, fast food, amusement rides, and game arcades. Kids will love it. ⌚ 3 hrs.

Take the R336 west to Spiddal. 15km (9½ miles).

2 ★★ Spiddal (An Spidéal). Farther along the scenic coast road, you'll pass through a couple



of small villages before you reach this Irish-speaking town. It's a charming place in which to wander or shop for locally made chunky Aran knit sweaters, pottery, and other handicrafts. Try the shop **Standún** on the coast road (☎ 91/553108; www.standun.com) for a range of Irish-made wares. The beach is gorgeous and makes a prime spot for a picnic. The ★ **Spiddal Craft Village (Ceardlann an Spidéil)** on the coast road (☎ 091/553041; www.ceardlann.com) is a cluster of cottage shops known for unique pottery, warm wool clothing, and gold and silver jewelry by talented local craftspeople. You can pick up hand-carved stone crafts, paintings, and posters. A sandwich and coffee from **Jackie's Bistro**, tucked away in a rustic cottage in the craft village, is tasty fuel for the road. ⌚ 2 hrs.

Continue on the R336 to Inverin. 5.6km (3½ miles).

3 **Inverin (Indreabhán).** Trout-fishing fans might want to stop in this tiny village, if only to spend some time at the **Crumlin Lodge Fisheries**, which has a lake stocked with sea-reared rainbow trout (prices start at €16 for bank fishing; 24-hr. advance booking required). Non-anglers can relax on Inverin's lovely beach. You can catch a 10-minute flight to the Aran

Islands from the Connemara Regional Airport nearby. ⌚ 1 hr.

Stay on the R336 to Derravonniff. Turn left onto the R340 to Ros Muc. 38km (23 miles).

4 **Pádraig Pearse Cottage (Ros Muc).** If you continue on R336 a few more miles, you'll leave the Galway Bay coast and begin making your way into the rocky and remote scenery of Connemara. That's where you'll find Ros Muc, site of the Pádraig Pearse Cottage. Pearse, one of the leaders of Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising, used this simple thatched-roof cottage as a retreat. Now a national monument, the cottage contains documents, photographs, and memorabilia. ⌚ 30 min. Open mid-June to mid-Sept daily 9:30am–5:30pm. €1.50 adults, kids free.

The Defenders of this Realm . . . think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, provided against everything; but the fools! — They have left us our Fenian dead. While Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

PADRAIG PEARSE



Galway City Shopping A to Z

Antiques

Cobwebs

This sweet little shop across from the Spanish Arch sells jewelry, antique toys, curios, and rarities from Ireland and beyond. 7 Quay Lane. ☎ 091/564388. www.cobwebs.ie. MC, V.

★★ The Winding Stair

Three floors are crammed with antiques—it's just the place to pick up an Art Nouveau lamp, painted wooden chest, or church pew. 4 Mainguard St. ☎ 091/561682.

Art Galleries

Art Essence Gallery

The home gallery of the glass artist Denise Hogan, this gallery on Tuam Road at the edge of town will require a car or taxi, but for lovers of glass designs, it will be worth the trip. Hogan's delicate creations are covetable and charming. Liosbán Estate, Tuam Rd. ☎ 091/764770. www.artessence.ie.

> *Cut crystal at Treasure Chest.*

Galway City Shopping Best Bets

Best Place to Relax with an Old Book

The Winding Stair 4 Mainguard St. (p 304)

Best Sheepskin Rugs

Galway Woollen Market 21 High St. (p 306)

Best Claddagh Rings

Hartmann & Son 29 William St. (p 305)

Best Champagne Glasses

Galway Irish Crystal Dublin Rd. (p 305)

Best Place to Wander If You Don't Know What You Want

The Cornstore Middle St. (p 305)

Black Cat Gallery

This small, approachable gallery is owned by the artists whose work it displays. Jannet Vinnell and Ted Turton use the Irish landscape and culture as the foundation upon which they build their colorful paintings and painted cards. Market St. ☎ 091/566422.

Bold Art Gallery

One of the city's newest galleries, filled with works by up-and-coming artists, is anchored by works from more established artists, including Elizabeth Cope, Graham Knuttel, and Rasher and John Keating. Merchants Rd. ☎ 091/539900. www.boldartgallery.com.

Kenny's Bookshop & Art Gallery

A combination bookstore and art gallery, this popular, relaxed shop has rooms lined with antiquarian and current books, and others filled with artworks by dozens of contemporary Irish artists, including Kenneth Webb, Brian Ballard, and John fFrench (yes, two fFs, as written—it's an old Irish name). Liosbán Retail Park, Tuarn Rd. ☎ 091/709350. www.thekennygallery.ie.

Bookstores

Charlie Byrne's Bookshop

This is an atmospheric bookshop, where most of the books are secondhand. There's a good selection of paperbacks, should you need to stock up, and plenty of Irish-interest titles. There are also some surprising finds, with a fair selection of titles in archaeology, art history, the cinema, and music. The Cornstore, Middle St. ☎ 091/561766. www.charliebyrne.com. MC, V.

Crafts, Crystal & Jewelry

★★ Design Concourse

If you're looking for local handicrafts, this is a good choice, as it's filled with the work of dozens of talented Irish craftspeople. Offerings include woodwork, jewelry, furniture, and glass. Kirwan's Lane. ☎ 091/566927.

★ Fallers of Galway

Dating from 1879, Fallers has long been a prime source of Claddagh rings, many of which are made on the premises. It also sells Celtic crosses, some inlaid with Connemara marble, as well as gold and silver jewelry and crystal. Williamsgate St. ☎ 800/229-3892 in the U.S. (for catalogs), or 091/561226. www.fallers.com. AE, MC, V.

★★★ Galway Irish Crystal

This factory outlet on the loop (or "ring road") around Galway Town has lots of hand-cut crystal and a center that explains where it all comes from and how it's made. Dublin Rd., Merlin Park. ☎ 091/757311. MC, V.



➤ *The Galway outpost of Brown Thomas.*

★ Hartmann & Son Ltd.

This family-owned shop enjoys a far-reaching reputation for its watchmakers, goldsmiths, and makers of Claddagh rings. 29 William St. ☎ 091/562063. www.hartmanns.ie. MC, V.

Department Stores & Malls

★ Brown Thomas

This is the local branch of one of Ireland's oldest and most upscale department stores, owned by the same people as London's Selfridges. Galway's best-dressed fashionistas have this place on speed dial. William St. (at Eglinton St.) ☎ 091/565254. www.brownthomas.com. AE, MC, V.

★★ The Cornstore

This small, handy shopping mall is packed full of specialized shops. You can find clothes, gifts, wine, and music, all in one compact location. Middle St.

SHOPPING

- Art Essence Gallery **44**
- Black Cat Gallery **31**
- Bold Art Gallery **27**
- Brown Thomas **35**
- Charlie Byrne's Bookshop **25**
- Cobwebs **18**
- Connaught Antiques **42**
- The Cornstore **26**
- Design Concourse **8**
- Eyre Square Centre **37**
- Fallers of Galway **33**
- Fallers Sweater Shop **20**
- Galway Irish Crystal **46**
- Hartmann & Son Ltd. **33**
- Kenny's Bookshop & Art Gallery **45**
- Mac Eocagain/Galway Woollen Market **23**
- O'Máille (O'Malley) **21**
- P. Powell and Sons **30**
- Treasure Chest **29**
- Twice As Nice **19**
- The Winding Stair **16**

RESTAURANTS

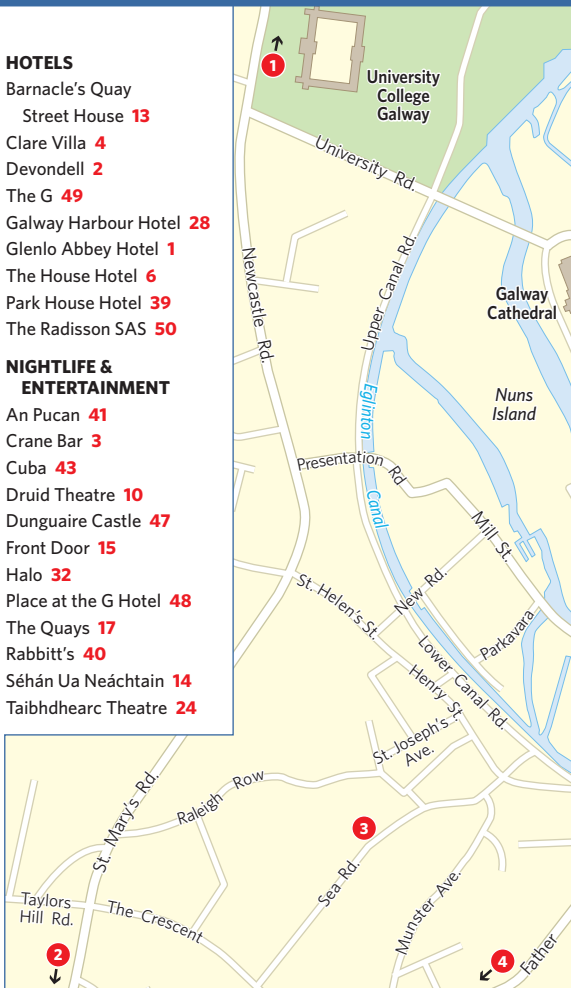
- Busker Brownes **9**
- The Cobblestone **11**
- Conlon **34**
- G.B.C.
(Galway Bakery Company) **36**
- Kirwan's Lane **12**
- The Malt House **22**
- McDonagh's **7**
- Nimmo's **5**
- Park Room Restaurant **42**

HOTELS

- Barnacle's Quay Street House **13**
- Clare Villa **4**
- Devondell **2**
- The G **49**
- Galway Harbour Hotel **28**
- Glenlo Abbey Hotel **1**
- The House Hotel **6**
- Park House Hotel **39**
- The Radisson SAS **50**

NIGHTLIFE & ENTERTAINMENT

- An Pucan **41**
- Crane Bar **3**
- Cuba **43**
- Druid Theatre **10**
- Dunguaire Castle **47**
- Front Door **15**
- Halo **32**
- Place at the G Hotel **48**
- The Quays **17**
- Rabbitt's **40**
- Séhan Ua Neáchtain **14**
- Taibhdhearc Theatre **24**

**Eyre Square Centre**

Galway City's largest mall, this center has 50 shops of all shapes and sizes and is nicely designed, incorporating a section of Galway's medieval town wall into its structure. It's good for clothes shopping. Eyre Sq.

Music**P. Powell and Sons**

This family-run shop sells traditional Irish music, instruments, and recordings. The Four Corners, Williams St. ☎ 091/562295. MC, V.

Tweeds, Woolens & Clothing**★ Fallers Sweater Shop**

This shop has a huge supply of knitwear made by Irish artisans from the wool of Irish sheep. Prices are quite good. 25 High St. ☎ 091/564833. MC, V.

Mac Eocagain/Galway Woollen Market

An excellent resource if you're looking for traditional Aran hand-knits and colorful hand-loomed sweaters and capes. This place also carries linens, lace, and sheepskins. 21 High St. ☎ 091/562491. MC, V.

Galway City Shopping, Restaurants, Hotels & Nightlife



O'Máille (O'Malley)

Established in 1938, this shop became famous in the 1950s for outfitting the entire cast of *The Quiet Man* and has done a fabulous business ever since in quality Irish tweeds, knitwear, and traditional Aran knits. 16 High St. ☎ 091/562696. www.omaille.com. MC, V.

Treasure Chest

With an artful exterior that seems to have stepped straight out of Wedgwood, this is a pleasant one-stop shop for Royal Tara and Royal Doulton china and Belleek china. It

also carries Irish designer clothing and Aran knitwear. 31-33 William St. and Castle St. ☎ 091/563862. www.treasurechest.ie. AE, MC, V.

Twice As Nice

A sweet, old-fashioned shop, this little gem is filled with fine white linens and cottons for the bedroom and dining room, as well as antique linens and sumptuous christening gowns. 5 Quay St. ☎ 091/566332. MC, V.



Galway City Restaurants A to Z

★ **Busker Brownes** CAFE/BAR

A modern cafe in a medieval building, Busker Browne's is a favorite of locals and travelers for its funky decor—mixing ancient stonework with modern art—and for its big breakfasts, hamburgers, sandwiches, fresh stews, and pasta. It's one of just a few Galway eateries that stays open late. Upper Cross St. ☎ 091/563377. Main courses €7–€17. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

The Cobblestone VEGETARIAN

Tucked away on a winding medieval lane, this casual eatery serves excellent fresh salads, soups, quiches, and pastas. There are plenty of vegetarian dishes (try the “beanie shepherd pie”) and fresh croissants, breads, muffins, cakes, and cookies. Head here when you're in the mood for a light meal or snack. Kirwan's Lane. ☎ 091/567227. Main courses €6–€16. MC, V. Breakfast, lunch & early dinners daily.

★★ **Conlon** SEAFOOD

This is the local seafood specialist, with 20 varieties of fresh fish and shellfish always on the menu. House specialties are wild salmon and oysters. Entrees include grilled wild

Galway City Restaurant Best Bets

Best for History & Hamburgers

Busker Brownes \$ Upper Cross St. (p 308)

Best for Breakfast

G.B.C. \$ 7 Williamsgate St. (p 309)

Best Fish and Chips

McDonagh's \$\$ 22 Quay St. (p 309)

Best for the Übertrendy

Nimmo's \$\$\$ Long Walk, Spanish Arch (p 309)

Best Traditional Cuisine

Park Room Restaurant \$\$\$\$ Eyre Sq. (p 309)

salmon, steamed Galway Bay mussels, and fishermen's platters with smoked salmon, mussels, prawns, oysters, and crab claws. Eglinton Court. ☎ 091/562268. Main courses €8–€27. DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

> *Freshly shucked oysters at Conlon.*

★★ G.B.C. (Galway Bakery Company) BISTRO

This building is two restaurants in one: a self-service coffee shop with a full-service bistro upstairs. The restaurant menu lists an unfussy selection of dishes, from steaks, seafood, and burgers to pasta and chicken fajitas. Baked goods, particularly the homemade brown bread, are an added attraction. The coffee shop serves memorably good breakfasts and light lunches. 7 Williamsgate St. ☎ 091/563087. www.gbcbgalway.com. €8–€20. AE, DC, MC, V. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ Kirwan's Lane CONTINENTAL

This restaurant is rustic chic, with pine furnishings and walls painted warm ochre and vivid red. It's a good value at lunchtime, when the constantly changing menu might include a starter of smoked haddock and clam chowder or ox tongue pancetta with truffle smoked potatoes. The dinner menu features dishes with fresh local produce and seafood, including crab, guinea fowl, and sautéed fresh monkfish, all beautifully presented. Kirwan's Lane. ☎ 091/568266. Reservations recommended. Main courses €18–€29. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily; closed Sun Sept–June.

★★ The Malt House MODERN IRISH

This long-established place on the High Street has transformed under new ownership. The once starched atmosphere is now relaxed and cool. The dining room is bright and spacious, with chic contemporary art. The food is still upmarket Irish bistro with an international twist, but with a heightened emphasis on local ingredients (the menu tells you precisely where they came from). It's very modern and eco-friendly. Seafood is a specialty—the oysters are renowned for their quality—while typical mains include supreme of salmon with winter greens and sweet chili sauce, or rib-eye with homemade fries and pepper sauce. High St. ☎ 091/567866. www.themalthouse.ie. Entrees €20–€38. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★ McDonagh's FISH AND CHIPS/SEAFOOD

For seafood straight off the boats in an authentic maritime atmosphere, this is Galway's best choice. The place is divided into three parts: a traditional "chipper" for fish and chips, a smart restaurant in the back, and a fish market where you can buy raw seafood. The lengthy menu includes salmon, trout, and lemon or black sole,



> Come for early-bird savings at the Malt House.

all cooked to order. 22 Quay St. ☎ 091/565809. www.mcdonaghs.net. Reservations not accepted June–Aug. Entrees €8–€20 (seafood platter €35); fish and chips about €9. AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

★★ Nimmo's WINE BAR/SEAFOOD

This trendy place manages to serve fantastic food while constantly admiring itself. It's ideal for a festive, buzzy meal out. The menu changes according to season and tends to feature seafood in the summer and game in winter. Try the Barbary duck confit or grilled filet of sea bass with spring onion mashed potatoes. Save room for dessert, brought in by Goya's, Galway's best bakery. Long Walk, Spanish Arch. ☎ 091/561114. www.nimmos.ie. Reservations recommended. Main courses €13–€19. MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sun.

★ **Park Room Restaurant.** SEAFOOD/CONTINENTAL Half a block east of Eyre Square, this fine restaurant has old-world decor with stained glass and oil paintings, and a sophisticated approach. Entrees include grilled prime sirloin, steak au poivre, and pan-fried sea trout with shrimp and dill butter. Forster St., Eyre Sq. ☎ 091/564924. Reservations recommended. Main courses €20–€32. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

Dining Tip

See map p 306 for restaurants in Galway City.



Galway City Hotels A to Z

Barnacle's Quay Street House

This cheap and cheerful guesthouse in a 16th-century house has big fireplaces and lots of character. Bedrooms are done in sunny yellows, and there's a communal kitchen. The clientele tends to be college students filling the shared dorm rooms, but the four-bed rooms are also good for families on a budget. 10 Quay St., Galway. ☎ 091/568644. www.barnacles.ie. 10 units. Double €64–€97. AE, MC, V.

★ **Clare Villa**

This spacious, modern house is steps from the beach. Pleasant rooms all have firm, comfortable beds, and the owners are helpful and friendly. The biggest attraction, though, is proximity to the seafront and all that fresh salt air. 38 Threadneedle Rd. ☎ 091/522520. clarevilla@yahoo.com. 6 units. Double €70–€90. No credit cards.

★★ **Devondell**

You'd be hard-pressed to find a better B&B in Galway than Berna Kelly's much-lauded house in the Lower Salthill residential area, about 2km (1¼ miles) from Galway's city center. It's

➤ *The Park House Hotel.*

Galway City Hotel Best Bets

Best Backpacker Hangout

Barnacle's Quay Street House \$ 10 Quay St. (p 310)

Best Breakfast

Devondell \$ 47 Devon Park (p 310)

Best Place to Flaunt Your Prada

The G \$\$\$\$ Wellpark (p 310)

Most Relaxing

Park House Hotel \$\$\$\$ Foster St., Eyre Sq. (p 311)

Best Ocean Views

Clare Villa \$ 38 Threadneedle Rd. (p 310)

a modern house, and guest rooms are spacious with period furnishings and crisp Irish linens. Breakfasts are exceptional. 47 Devon Park, Lower Salthill. ☎ 091/528306. www.devondell.com. 4 units. Double €80–€90. MC, V.

The G

Galway is abuzz about this over-the-top place designed by the hat designer Philip Treacy. In-

side, it looks like a cross between *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* and *My Fair Lady*—the Pink Salon is the color of Pepto-Bismol with a white-and-black spiral carpet and purple sofas. Rooms are calmer, in soothing white with touches of coffee and cream, and luxuriant beds have soft pillows and lush linens. Bathrooms are sensational; many have showers built for two, and all have excellent bath products. Wellpark, Galway. ☎ 091/865200. www.theghhotel.ie. 101 units. Double €260. AE, MC, V.

Galway Harbour Hotel

This modern hotel has borrowed a lot from boutique hotels. It has clean lines, blond wood, neutral colors, and cleverly recessed lights above the beds. Rooms are large and quiet, and because it's well located, it's not at all bad for the price; but some beds are uncomfortable, and the bathrooms are unimaginative with painfully bright lighting. The dining room looks too chain-hotelish to be comfortable. New Dock Rd., Galway. ☎ 091/569466. www.galwayharbourhotel.com. 96 units. Double €150–€180. AE, MC, V.

* Glenlo Abbey Hotel

About 2 miles outside Galway, this secluded, sprawling stone hotel overlooks Lough Corrib in a sylvan setting, surrounded by a 9-hole golf course. The 18th-century building retains its grandeur in the public areas, with hand-carved wood furnishings, hand-loomed carpets, art, and antiques. The guest rooms, which have lovely views of Lough Corrib and the countryside, are luxuriously decorated with traditional furnishings. Bushy Park, Galway. ☎ 091/526666. www.glenlo.com. 46 units. Double €295–€340. AE, MC, V.

** The House Hotel

From its low-key lobby with polished oak floors, columns, and big windows, to its subtle, contemporary rooms, this is a comfortable, modern alternative. Rooms are divided into categories like “comfy,” “classy,” and “swanky,” and they pretty much do what it says on the label. All have comfortable beds, soft linens, lots of sunlight, high ceilings, and a refreshing urban feel. Spanish Parade, Galway. ☎ 091/538900. www.thehousehotel.ie. 45 units. Double €150–€300. AE, MC, V.

* Park House Hotel

This place is all about privacy and serenity—no two rooms directly face each other, ensuring peace and quiet for all guests. Rooms are



> “Comfy,” “classy,” and “swanky” rooms are available at the House Hotel.

spacious and classically decorated with plaid bedspreads and colorful throw pillows. Superior rooms are arranged around a roof garden. All rooms have free broadband—a relative rarity in Ireland. **The Park Room Restaurant** is an award-winning, luxurious operation (p 309). Foster St., Eyre Sq., Galway. ☎ 091/564924. www.parkhousehotel.ie. 84 units. Double €150–€250, €320 suites. AE, MC, V.

The Radisson SAS

This hotel might be a bit bland and international-chain-esque, but it's in a great location near Eyre Square, and it affords all the handy perks a big hotel chain can offer. Some rooms have scenic bay views, and all are fairly spacious and well equipped with comfortable beds, modern bathrooms, and plenty of electronic gadgets—although the standard rooms are probably not going to win any design awards. Upper rooms are quieter than lower rooms—which can get a bit of street noise, but all in all, this is a handy option. Lough Atalia Rd., Galway. ☎ 091/538300. www.radissonhotelgalway.com. 282 units. Double €150–€300. AE, MC, V.

Lodgings Tip

See map p 306 for hotels in Galway City.



Galway City Nightlife & Entertainment A to Z

Medieval Banquet

★ **Kids** **Dunguaire Castle**

A half-hour drive from Galway, this splendid 16th-century castle hosts medieval meals in summer, along with a show of works by Irish writers such as Synge, Yeats, and Gogarty. Near Kinvara. ☎ 061/361511. www.shannonheritage.com. Dinner €51 adults, €38 kids 11 & under. May–Sept nightly 5:30 and 8:45pm. 16 miles south of Galway on the Ballyvaughan rd. (N67).

Nightclubs

Cuba

This place packs in Galway's more sophisticated late-20-somethings for seriously cool Latin jazz or funk on Saturday nights. Eyre Sq. ☎ 091/565991. 10pm–2am nightly. Cover charge €5–€10.

Halo

This trendy, see-and-be-seen club attracts an over-20s crowd with its laid-back vibe. 36 Abbeygate St. Upper. ☎ 091/565976. 10pm–2am nightly. Cover charge €10.

> *The cool crowd parties at Cuba.*

Galway City Nightlife Best Bets

Best Royal Feast

Dunguaire Castle Kinvara (p 312)

Best Spot for Those Who Hate Eavesdropping

An Pucan 11 Forster St. (p 312)

Best Traditional Folk Tale Enactments

Druid Theatre Chapel Lane (p 314)

Best Place to Meet the Locals

Séhán Ua Neáchtain 17 Cross St. (p 313)

Best Place to Relax with a Newspaper

Front Door High St. (p 313)

Pubs & Bars

★★ **An Pucan**

A block east of Eyre Square, this old-fashioned nautical-themed pub hosts good Irish traditional music (daily from 9pm). It's an Irish-language pub, though, so the eavesdropping is terrible if you're not bilingual. 11 Forster St. ☎ 091/561528.



> *The bar at the Front Door, sunny by day and vibrant after dark.*

Crane Bar

In the southwestern part of Galway, at the corner of an open market area called “the Small Crane,” this rustic pub is known for its live music. From 9pm every night, there is country and western music downstairs and traditional Irish tunes upstairs. 2 Sea Rd. ☎ 091/587419.

★ Front Door

This sunny, laid-back pub is a good place to linger over a pint and newspaper. Its many windows let the sun pour in, and the staff couldn’t care less how long you stay. It’s a lovely, relaxed place. High St. ☎ 091/563757. www.frontdoorpub.com.

Place at the G Hotel

This sleek, Manhattan-style hotel bar (p 310), where the floor is carpeted in thousands of red Swarovski crystals, is pure glam. A neon sign reads, THIS MUST BE THE PLACE, and it certainly is the place to be for cocktails and people-watching. Sit back with a juicy apple martini and watch the vanity fair. ☺ 2 hr. Wellpark. ☎ 091/865-5200.

The Quays

If this unusual pub looks a bit ecclesiastical, that’s because its entire interior was imported from a French medieval church—stained glass, carved wood, Gothic arches, pews, and all. Evening music ranges from traditional Irish to ‘70s retro to Dixieland, and it usually starts at 9pm. Quay St. and Chapel Lane. ☎ 091/568347.

★ Rabbitt’s

This place dates from 1872 and hardly appears to have changed since then, with lanterns hanging in the corners and pictures of old Galway on the walls. It’s run by the fourth generation of the Rabbitt family to helm a pub. 1 block east of Eyre Sq. 23–25 Forster St. ☎ 091/566490.

★ Séhán Ua Neáchtain

This is a proper locals pub, and its interior always appears enveloped in smoke, even now that smoking is forbidden in bars. It’s like the

Nightlife Tip

See map p 306 for nightlife in Galway City.



➤ *Locals share a pint at Séhán Ua Néachtain.*

haze of time has left its mark. It's got a quirky crowd that defies categorization—artists, farmers, shop owners, and business types—and a cheery, buzzing atmosphere. Come here to make new friends. 17 Cross St. ☎ 091/568820.

Theater & Music

★★ **Druid Theatre**

This creative theater group performs in two venues in Galway—in a converted grain warehouse at **Chapel Lane** on, you guessed it, Chapel Lane (☎ 091/568617) and at the **Town Hall Theatre** on Courthouse Square (☎ 091/569777). Performances are unique and original, focusing on Irish folk dramas and Anglo-Irish classics. It's widely viewed as one of

Ireland's best theaters, and shows are frequently sold out or touring; so book well in advance. www.druidtheatre.com. Tickets €15–€40.

★★★ **Taibhdhearc Theatre**

Pronounced “Thive-yark,” this 108-seat, year-round venue features Irish-language plays. In summer, it presents a program of traditional music, song, dance, and folk drama. Middle St. ☎ 091/563600. www.antaibhdhearc.com (website is in Irish). Tickets €10–€15. Box office Mon–Sat 1–6pm (until 8pm on show nights); most shows start at 8pm.

Galway City Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR **Aer Arann** flies from Dublin into Galway Airport (Carnmore, about 16km/10 miles east of the city; ☎ 091/755569; www.aerarann.ie or www.galwayairport.com) four times daily, two times a day to London. There's also regular service to Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh. The European budget airline **Flybe** (www.flybe.com) is expected to start regular flights to Belfast City airport from Galway. A taxi to the city center costs about €20; the occasional bus, if it coincides with your arrival, can be a handy alternative. It costs upwards of €5 and drops you off at Galway Rail Station. **BY TRAIN** **Irish Rail** trains from Dublin and other points arrive daily at Ceannt Station (☎ 091/561444; www.irishrail.ie), off Eyre Square. **BY BUS** Buses from all parts of Ireland arrive daily at **Bus Éireann Travel Centre**, Ceannt Station, Galway (☎ 091/562000; www.buseireann.ie). **BY CAR** As the gateway to west Ireland, Galway is the terminus for many national roads. They lead in from all parts of Ireland, including N84 and N17 from points north, N63 and N6 from the east, and N67 and N18 from the south.

ATMs/Cashpoints

Several banks in Eyre Square have ATMs and currency exchanges: Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, and Ulster Bank.

Dentists & Doctors

DENTIST Middle Court Dentist Surgery, Middle Street (☎ 091/566517), or Dr. James Kilrairie, 1st Floor American House, 1 Prospect Hill, Eyre Square (☎ 091/562932). **DOCTOR** For nonemergency medical help call the Crescent Medical Centre, 4 The Crescent (☎ 091/582321).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999**. University College Hospital is on Newcastle Road (☎ 091/544544), or there is Merlin Park Regional Hospital (☎ 091/775775).

Internet

Net Access, The Olde Malte Arcade, High Street (☎ 091/395725; www.netaccess.ie); **Hotlines**, 4 High St. (☎ 091/562838), Internet access

and low-cost international phone calls, open 7 days a week; **Galway Library (An Leabhar)**, in the Hynes Building, Augustine Street (☎ 091/561666), Internet terminals open Monday 2 to 5pm, Tuesday to Thursday 11am to 8pm, Friday 11am to 5pm, and Saturday 11am to 1pm and 2 to 5pm.

Pharmacies

Flanagan's Pharmacy, 32 Shop St. (☎ 091/562924); **Matt O'Flaherty Chemist**, 16 William St. (☎ 091/561442, or after-hours 091/525426); **Whelan's Chemist**, Williamsgate Street (☎ 091/562291).

Police

Main **Garda Station**, Mill Street (☎ 091/538000).

Post Office

Eglinton Street (☎ 091/534727), Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm.

Public Transportation

Galway has excellent local bus service. Buses run from the **Bus Éireann Travel Centre** (☎ 091/562000) or Eyre Square to various suburbs, including Salthill and the Galway Bay coastline. The fare starts at €1.50.

Taxis

Eyre Square and all the major hotels in the city have taxi ranks. If you need to call a cab, try **Abby Taxis** (☎ 091/533333), **Big-O Taxis** (091/585858), or **Galway Taxis** (☎ 091/561111).

Telephones

The area code in Galway is 091. Drop the "0" if dialing from outside the country.

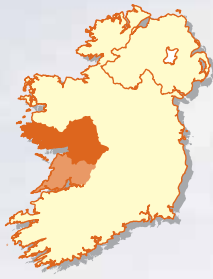
Toilets

There are public toilets in Eyre Square and at several other locations around town. Access is 20¢.

Tourism Office

Ireland West Tourism (Aras Fáilte), Foster Street (☎ 091/537700; www.discoverireland.ie/west). Open May, June, and September daily 9am to 5:45pm; July and August daily 9am to 7:45pm; October to April Monday to Friday 9am to 5:45pm, Saturday 9am to 12:45pm.





10

Counties Galway & Clare



Counties Galway & Clare in 3 Days

With its misty, mountain-fringed lakes, rugged coastline, and extensive wilderness, Galway is a wild and woolly area. Clare is distinguished by the lunar landscape of the Burren, dotted with mysterious ancient stone tables and graced with breathtaking vistas. Both are far enough west to be less crowded with tourists than Kerry or Cork, and each affords opportunities to climb hills, catch fish, explore history, and get away from it all in the Irish countryside.



> **PREVIOUS PAGE** The Cliffs of Moher are unforgettable, despite the hordes of tourists they attract. **THIS PAGE** The Burren National Park showcases Ireland's most unusual regional landscape.

START **Kilfenora, County Clare.** **TRIP LENGTH** 142km (88 miles).

1 ★★★ **The Burren (County Clare).** Start day one by immersing yourself in the **Burren National Park**; this is ideal walking territory, but even by car it's an unforgettable experience. At the visitor center on R476, you can pick up a wealth of information on the Burren's numerous walking trails and megalithic ruins. **Aillwee Cave**, near the little town of **Ballyvaughan**, are worth a look, as is the magnificent ruin of **Corcomroe Abbey**. You won't pass major towns in the Burren, but **Lisdoonvarna** is a

lusty spot worth a look (p 333). Ballyvaughan has the region's best small hotels and B&Bs. ⌚ 1 day. The Burren Centre. R476 to Kilfenora. ☎ 065/708-8030. www.theburrencentre.ie. For more information see p 330.

Head north on the N67 and N18 to Galway City. 50km (31 miles) approx.

2 ★★★ **Galway City.** Ireland's unofficial capital of culture, Galway is historic and hip, worth at least half a day of exploration. Start by looking around the **Medieval Quarter**, with its winding lanes and funky shops, and make your



- 1** The Burren
- 2** Galway City
- 3** Connemara National Park

way up to **Eyre Square**. Drop in at Galway's two superb arts venues, the **Druid Theatre** and the **Galway Arts Centre**, to see what's on. There are usually some good exhibitions, or you could try to book a ticket for an evening show. Then head to the **Nora Barnacle House**, former home of Mrs. James Joyce. After lunch, you could cruise Galway Bay or catch a ferry out to the beautiful, wild **Aran Islands** (p 300). Spend the night in Galway City. ☹ 1 day. For more on Galway City, see chapter 9.

Leave Galway on the N59 northwest. Follow this road as it loops around the edge of Connemara National Park to Letterfrack. 92km (57 miles). Note: You can cut out around 10km (6¼ miles) of the loop on the R344 north from Lissoughter, then rejoin the N59 at the top of the park. The road is mountainous and best avoided in bad weather.

3 * Connemara National Park.** Devote a day to exploring Connemara's rocky coast and lake-laced, boggy, mountainous interior. Start at the visitor center in Letterfrack, stopping on the way at the neo-Gothic **Kylemore Abbey & Garden**. Given that you're pressed for time, consider a pony trek or lace up your hiking shoes and head to the **Twelve Pins** mountain

Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.



> *Aillwee Cave was discovered by a local herdsman in 1940 but was kept a secret until 1973.*

range for some stunning views. Then travel farther down the N59 loop to the cheery town of Clifden for some time by the sea. ☹ 1 day. For details see p 328.

To return to Galway from Clifden, head southeast on the N59. 78km (49 miles).

Counties Galway & Clare in 1 Week

With a week in the wilds of Counties Galway and Clare, you can take in the over-touristed but nonetheless majestic Cliffs of Moher and then spend a couple of days exploring the otherworldly Burren region, a few days in the lakes and hills of Galway, and maybe even a day or two lazing on the beach or climbing Clare's cliffs for stupendous views that seem to stretch all the way to America.



> *The Burren spreads over a bedrock of limestone.*

START Bunratty. TRIP LENGTH 368km (229 miles).

1 kids Bunratty Castle & Folk Park (Bunratty).

Chances are you've arrived in Clare as most people do—either straight off the plane or driving up from the graceful but well-visited byways of County Kerry, possibly with a brief pause to sample County Limerick en route. (Our advice for the latter: Pause for a cup of tea and a gawp in gorgeous Adare, then give the rough and charmless Limerick Town a wide berth and move on through.) Either way, you're

about to enter more sparsely visited territory, so give the endless crowds a last hurrah with a visit to this popular castle and theme park. It's quite fun. ☺ Half-day. See p 336.

Leave Bunratty on the N18 northeast. Bypass Ennis and join the N85. Shortly after Ennistimon, turn right onto the R478 and follow signs to the Cliffs of Moher. 74km (46 miles).

2 ★ Cliffs of Moher. This natural wonder was marred by the recent addition of an extravagant visitor center, but the 8km-long (5 mile) Cliffs



of Moher themselves, soaring 214m (702 ft.) above the sea, are nevertheless among the most spectacular coastal landmarks in Ireland.

⌚ Half-day. See p 334.

Continue on the R478, then turn left onto the R479 at Doonagore. 15km (9½ miles).

3 ★★ Doolin. Spend the night in Doolin. This secluded fishing village has become the unofficial capital of Irish traditional music. The best places to revel in the *craic* are **Gus O'Connor's Pub** and **McGann's**. See p 334 for details.

Rejoin the R478 to Lisdoonvarna. 7.4km (4½ miles).

4 Lisdoonvarna. This pleasingly eccentric town is made for wandering. If you visit in the autumn, try to figure out why everyone's so loved up (p 333, **6**). ⌚ Half-day.

Take the N67 northeast to Ballyvaughan. 16km (10 miles).

5 Ballyvaughan. This darling village on the edge of the Burren is a good base for exploring the region—including the nearby **Corcomroe Abbey**, an impressive Cistercian ruin, and



> Old rock walls snake through the Burren.

Aillwee Cave, an underground complex with a fascinating history. ☉ Half-day.

Backtrack along the N67. After Feenagh take the R480 south. At the village of Leamaneh, turn right on the R476 to Kilfenora. 23km (14 miles).

6 * Burren National Park.** Devote a whole day to exploring the craggy beauty of this national park's karst terrain; one of the best ways is to follow the **Burren Way**, a 42km (26-mile) walking path. Start by getting maps and other information at the excellent visitor center in **Kilfenora**. If your family hails from County Clare, you may want to set aside a part of the day to visit the **Clare Heritage Centre**, a large genealogical research center in nearby Corofin (p 330). Spend a second night in Ballyvaughan. ☉ 1 day. For detailed information on the Burren, see p 330.

Leave Ballyvaughan on the N67 northeast. Turn onto the N18, then take the R338 to Galway at Oranmore. 49km (30 miles).

7 * Galway City.** Galway is youthful, buzzing, sophisticated, and small enough to explore in a day. Start off by checking out the **Medieval Quarter** and **Eyre Square**, then drop in at the **Galway City Museum**. James Joyce fans will want to see the **Nora Barnacle House**. Investigate what's on at the **Galway Arts Centre**; even if there isn't a show scheduled, they usually have good exhibitions. Spend the night in Galway City. ☉ 1 day. See chapter 9 for more information.

Catch a ferry from the Galway Docks in Galway City to the Aran Islands.

8 Aran Islands. These wild and starkly beautiful islands are an easy day trip from Galway City. You can explore the island's history at its classy visitor center, then wander the countryside, linger on its rocky shores, photograph its rare birds, and soak up the sea breeze. Spend a second night in Galway. ☉ 1 day. See p 300 for more on the Aran Islands.



> *Connemara is a geographic region rather than an official district.*

Leave Galway on the N59 northwest. Turn right onto the R344 at Lissoughter and loop around the National Park toward Kylemore. Follow signs to Kylemore Abbey. 84km (52 miles).

9 ★★ Kylemore Abbey & Garden (Kylemore). This spectacular neo-Gothic abbey makes a memorable first impression. The grounds are more remarkable than the interior, but stop for a look around anyway. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 326, **1**.

Backtrack along the N59 to Letterfrack. 9.4km (5¾ miles).

10 ★★★ Connemara National Park. This landscape of windswept bogs, sweeping moorland, and mountain ranges is another one of Ireland's most spectacular national parks. Start at the visitor center in Letterfrack, then choose how you want to spend the rest of the day: hiking up the **Twelve Pins** or taking a cross-country pony trek. ⌚ 1 day. See p 328 for details.

Continue down the N59 to Clifden for the night. 15km (9¼ miles).

11 Clifden. Spend a couple of hours in the morning exploring this seaside resort. Then head just out of town to **Dan O'Hara's Homestead Farm**. It's an interesting reconstruction of a pre-famine farm, with its own genuine megalithic tomb. ⌚ 2 hrs. See p 329 for details.

Head out of town on the N59 east. Turn right onto the R336 to Spiddal. 76km (47 miles).



> *Hikers love the Burren Way for its otherworldly views.*

Where to Stay & Dine

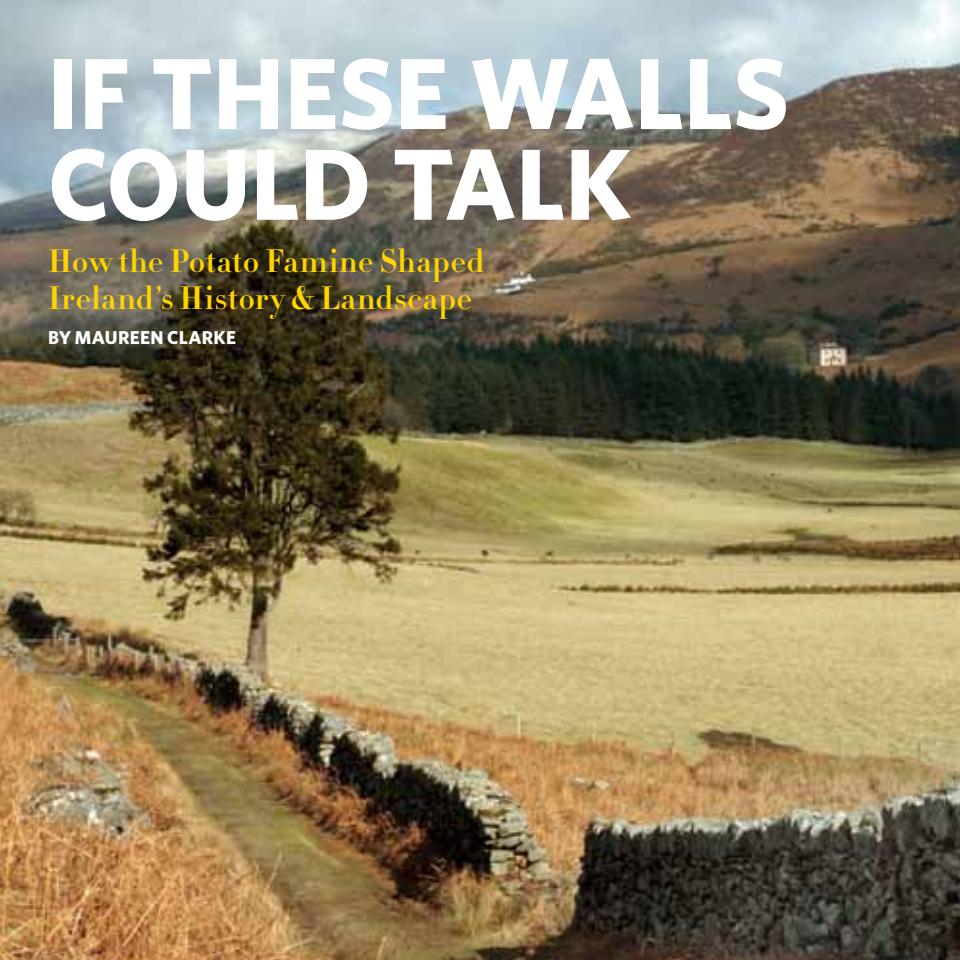
For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.

12 ★ Spiddal Craft Village (Spiddal). A beautiful and leisurely drive along the coast road will bring you to this cluster of cottage shops selling locally made crafts. It's one of our favorite shopping experiences in Ireland. ⌚ Half-day. See p 329 for details.

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

How the Potato Famine Shaped Ireland's History & Landscape

BY MAUREEN CLARKE



MORE THAN A MILLION Irish farmers and their families starved to death between 1845 and 1850, when a fungus destroyed most of the island's potato crop for several years straight. By 1851, a million more had emigrated to the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, and Australia, crammed onto filthy, disease-ridden vessels that became known as "coffin ships," as one in four passengers on average died aboard them. Like the American government in its fatally slow response to Hurricane Katrina, Great Britain did little to aid the subjects in its backyard until the damage was irreversible.



On par with the Protestant Reformation in England or the U.S. Civil War, the Great Famine changed the course of Irish history more radically than any other event, draining the population, seeding a vast diaspora, stoking contempt for British rule, and galvanizing the independence movement that led to the Republic's formation in 1919.



Seeds of Disaster

By the 1840s, Ireland is firmly in Britain's grip, after a failed revolution in 1798. Irish farms are now held and heavily subdivided by absentee Protestant English or Anglo-Irish aristocrats. Protestant middlemen collect rent from mostly Catholic farmers. Under these conditions, the potato is life itself for the Irish.

In Ireland's soggy, cool soil, the potato flourishes with little human intervention. Rich in iron, protein, and vitamin C, it yields optimal nutrition per acre on small land allocations. Pre-famine Ireland consumes 7 million tons a year; 3 million of the poorest farmers subsist solely on spuds.

In 1845, a fungus called "late blight," aka "wet rot" (*Phytophthora infestans*), blows into fields outside Dublin and eventually across the island. Potatoes develop talc-like spores, which turn to dark spots and then to open sores, emitting a sickening stench and turning this indispensable staple to slime overnight.

The Lean Years

1845

> In fall, half of Ireland's potato crop fails.

1846

> By spring, peasants survive on what few potatoes remain and government rations of undigestible American "Indian corn."

> English Prime Minister Robert Peel initiates the Public Works program: Half a million starving peasants are forced to work for food, building purposeless walls and roads to nowhere. Walls remain, most concentrated in Galway, Clare, Sligo, and Mayo.

> England cuts off rations. The blight accelerates, decimating the entire crop.

> Exports of Irish barley, wheat, oats, beef, lamb, and pork flow as usual to England; Irish peasants survive on wild berries, turnips, seaweed, toxic shellfish, roots, weeds, and grass.

1847

> Peel ends the Public Works program and establishes soup kitchens dispensing a nutrient-poor broth.

> As tenants die by the thousands, landlords demand rent and begin evicting families in winter. Dogs and rats eat the fallen dead; the dying eat the dogs and rats.

> Mass starvation and its deadly allies—famine dropsy, dysentery, scurvy, and typhus—create unimaginable misery.

> The first coffin ship departs for Québec: 100,000 passengers pay to make the months-long journey; one in four dies. The poorest of the poor emigrate to Liverpool, Glasgow, and South Wales on ships exporting Irish food.

1848–49

> Nationalist group called Young Ireland forms. Great Britain threatens rebels with deportation to Botany Bay, Australia. Men and boys commit crimes in hopes of deportation.

> Dublin, Cork, and Waterford fall under martial law.

> Blight returns, decimating the crop. Landlords continue mass evictions.

> Emigration, mostly to the U.S., escalates exponentially.

> Fatalities escalate. Bodies are buried in mass graves a few inches below the soil.

1850 & On

> Potato crop is healthy. Two million fewer Irish remain to consume it.

> The 1851 census records 6.5 million inhabitants—down from 8.5 million in 1845.

> Irish culture begins reinventing itself at large, in fledgling nations such as the United States, Canada, and Australia.

> Ireland's independence movement can't be stopped—ultimately leading to a free Ireland in 1919 and acceptance by the European Union in 1973.

Connemara

Oscar Wilde called Connemara a “savage beauty—wild, mountainous country, in every way magnificent.” You’ll know it when you see it, with its white-sand ocean beaches, dark bogs, and tall, jagged mountains punctuated by curving glassy lakes dotted with green islands. Don’t look for it on road signs, though; it’s not a civic entity but a geographic region called “Conmaicnemara” (the tribe of Cormac by the sea) by the ancient Gaelics. Like the Burren in County Clare, it has hazy boundaries, but most agree that it falls west of Galway City and Lough Corrib, continuing to the Atlantic.



> *The water-laced wilds of Connemara.*

START Kylemore Abbey, just outside Kylemore, County Galway. **TRIP LENGTH** 18km (11 miles).

1 ★★ Kylemore Abbey & Garden (Kylemore). We first discovered Kylemore Abbey on a road trip out of Galway City. As you round yet another bend on the barren stretch of country

road, this extraordinary neo-Gothic abbey looms into view at the base of a wooded hill across the mirror-like Kylemore Lake. The inside is not as impressive, but the grounds are attraction enough. The highlight is the recently restored Gothic chapel, an exquisite cathedral in miniature



Flights to Aran Islands

You can sail to the Aran Islands from Rossaveal in Connemara or fly on **Aer Arann Islands'** small island-hopper planes from Connemara Airport. Flight time is 10 minutes and tickets cost around €45. A range of specials is usually offered, combining flights with bus/accommodations. For more information on the Aran Islands see p 300.

with a plain, somber cemetery to one side and a lavish Victorian walled garden. The complex includes a decent **restaurant** that serves produce grown on the nuns' farm and tea with good scones; a shop with a working pottery studio; and a visitor center. Try to be here when they ring the bells for midday office or for vespers at 6pm. ⌚ 1 hr. Kylemore, Co. Galway. ☎ 095/41146. www.kylemoreabbey.com. Tickets €12 adults, €8 seniors and students, free kids under 13. Abbey year-round daily 9am–5:30pm. Garden Easter–Sept daily 10:30am–4:30pm.

Head west on the N59 and follow signs for Letterfrack and the National Park visitor center. 3.5km (2¼ miles).



> Kylemore is still an active Benedictine abbey and the oldest of its kind in Ireland.



> *The native Connemara pony's sturdiness and gentle manner seem made to handle the region's rugged landscape and reluctant riders.*

2 ★★★ Connemara National Park. This gorgeous national park encompasses over 2,000 hectares (4,940 acres) of mountains, bogs, grasslands, and hiking trails. Some of the best lead through the peaceful **Gleann Mór (Big Glen)**, with its River Polladirk, or up to the **Twelve Bens** (also called the Twelve Pins), a small, quartzite mountain range north of the Galway-Clifden road. Nearby are the lesser-known, equally lovely **Maumturk** range and the breathtaking **Killary Fiord**—the only fiord in Ireland. None of the Twelve Bens rises higher than 730m (2,395 ft.), which makes their summits quite accessible to those who don't mind walking at a steep incline. Frequent rainfall produces dozens of tiny streams and waterfalls, and the views are spectacular. Pony trekking is growing in popularity (p 329). The excellent visitor center south of the crossroads in Letterfrack dispenses general information on the park and sustenance in the form of tea, sandwiches, and fresh-baked goods. ☹ 1 day. Clifden-Westport rd. (N59), Letterfrack, Co. Galway. 📞 095/41054. Open year-round. Visitor center Apr-May and

Connemara Walking Centre

This company's expert local guides lead walking tours of Connemara with an emphasis on history, archaeology, and wildlife. The walks cover different sections—from the Renvyle Peninsula and Roundstone Bog to the Kylemore Valley, the Maumturk Mountains, and Sky Road. Weeklong trips are based at Dun Gibbons, a center dedicated to exploring Connemara's countryside. Walks gather at Island House on Market Street in Clifden and include bus transportation to the walking site. Tours run from March to October and cost from €20. For reservations and information call ☎ 095/21379.

Sept to mid-Oct daily 10am–5:30pm; June daily 10am–6:30pm; July–Aug daily 9:30am–6:30pm; closed mid-Oct to Mar.

Take the N59 loop south to Lettershea and follow signs for Dan O'Hara's Homestead Farm. 23km (14 miles).

3 ★ Dan O'Hara's Homestead Farm (Letter-shea). This small farm models prefamine conditions to reflect daily life in the 1840s, with local people using traditional tilling and farming methods. Cleverly designed reconstructions of ancient dwellings and fortifications lend insight into how things looked then. The grounds encompass a megalithic tomb and a dolmen, self-catering cottages, and a farmhouse B&B. ☎ 1½ hr. About 6.5km (4 miles) east of Clifden off the N59, Letter-shea, Clifden, Co. Galway. ☎ 095/21246. Tickets €8 adults, €7 seniors and students, €4.50 kids. Apr–Oct daily 10am–6pm; closed Nov–Mar.

Continue on the N59 to Moycullen and follow signs for the Connemara Marble Visitor Centre. 58km (36 miles).

4 ★ Connemara Marble Visitor Centre (Moycullen). Connemara's unique green marble is quarried, cut, shaped, and polished here. Estimated by geologists to be about 500 million years old, the marble ranges from lime green to dark emerald. On weekdays you'll see craftspeople at work hand-fashioning jewelry, paperweights, ashtrays, Celtic crosses, and other giftware. ☎ 1 hr. Moycullen, Co. Galway. ☎ 091/555102. Open daily 9am to 5:30pm. 13km (8 miles) west of Galway City on Galway-Clifden rd. (N59).

From Moycullen, take the country road southwest through Lealetter, Laughil, and Knock. At the junction with the R336 coast road, turn left to Spiddal. 15km (9½ miles).

5 ★ Spiddal (An Spidéal). A lovely coastal village and favorite summer day trip from Galway City, Spiddal is also the location for one of the country's best shopping experiences—the **Spiddal Craft Village (Ceardlann an Spidéil)**. This cluster of cottage shops for local craftspeople is a good place to buy unique pottery, woven wool, and jewelry. The art galleries feature hand-carved stone crafts, sculpture, paintings, and posters, and there's a good coffee shop on the premises. For a snack, lunch, or light meal, **Jackie's Bistro**, in a rustic cottage at the Craft Village, comes highly recommended. ☎ 2 hr. Craft Village: Coast rd., Spiddal, Co. Galway. ☎ 091/553041. www.ceardlann.com. Shops open July–Aug Mon–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun 2–5:30pm; Sept–June Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm.

To get to Galway City from Spiddal, continue on the R336 coast road. 18km (11 miles).



Connemara Pony Trekking

The sturdy yet elegant Connemara pony is the only horse breed native to Ireland, though it has received an infusion of Spanish blood over the centuries. Often raised in tiny fields with limestone pastures, the ponies are known for their stamina and gentleness, which make them ideal for amateur riders and young people. They are also born and bred to traverse the region's rugged terrain, so they are adept at scaling short, steep hills and delicately picking their way along rocky shores. Because much of the countryside is well off the beaten track, pony trekking is growing in popularity. It gets you off the busy roads and out into the countryside and onto the white-sand beaches near Roundstone and elsewhere along the coast. Several good riding centers can set you up with guided treks at all levels of ability. The best are the **Aille Cross Equestrian Centre** near Loughrea (☎ 091/841216; www.aille-cross.com); the **Cleggan Riding Centre** at Cleggan (☎ 095/44746; www.clegganridingcentre.com); and the **Delphi Adventure Centre** at Leenane (☎ 095/42307; www.delphiadventureholidays.ie). For more information, see p 337, 4.

Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.

The Burren

Sheets of weathered limestone interconnect like puzzle pieces, jutting and undulating up hillsides and down stony valleys as far as the eye can see in the desolately beautiful Burren (from the Gaelic *bhoireann*, meaning “stony place”). One of the best ways to explore this ecologically diverse karst landscape is to drive the R480. The corkscrew-like road leads in a series of curves from Corofin through gorgeous scenery to the village of Ballyvaughan, overlooking the waters of Galway Bay. Lisdoonvarna, on the western edge of the region, is a tiny old-fashioned spa town long known for its natural mineral springs. Each summer, people flock here to bathe in its sulfuric streams, iron creeks, and iodine lakes.



> The 5,000-year-old Poul nabrone Dolmen stands majestic amidst the Burren's stark landscape.

START The Burren National Park. **TRIP LENGTH**
74km (46 miles).

1 ★★★ Burren National Park. Spread across 1,653 hectares (4,085 acres), and continually acquiring more land as it becomes available, this remarkable landscape is dotted with picturesque ruined castles, tumbling cliffs, rushing rivers, and, especially in May, wildflowers flourishing in what little soil is available between the interlocking tables of limestone that lend this terrain a lunar aspect. The park is centered at Mullaghmore Mountain, but there are no official entrance points, admission charges, or restrictions to access.

The Burren Centre, on the R476 to Kilfenora, is a fine place to acquaint yourself with all facets of the area. Using films, landscape models, and interpretive displays, it illustrates the Burren's geology, flora, and fauna. ⌚ 2 hr. **The Burren Centre.** R476 to Kilfenora. ☎ 065/708-8030. www.theburrencentre.ie. Admission to the exhibition €6 adults, €5 seniors and students, €4 kids. Mid-March to May and Sept-Oct daily 10am-5pm; Jun-Aug daily 9:30am-6pm; closed Nov-mid-March.

2 Clare Heritage Centre. Housed in a former Church of Ireland edifice built in 1718, this small but engaging heritage center has exhibits on



Clare farming, industry, commerce, language, and music, as well as a handy tearoom and gift shop. If you're named Kelly, Murphy, or Walsh (among others) and researching your family roots, you might also want to stop by its well-equipped genealogical research center. If you're *really* interested in building your family tree, the staff will undertake a fully-fledged family history report for between €195 and €425, depending on how much work is required. ⌚ 30 min. R476 to Corofin, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/683-7955. www.clareroots.com. Museum admission €4 adults; €3.50 seniors, students & children. May-Oct daily 10am-6pm. Closed Nov-Apr.

Take the R476 north. Turn right at the junction with the R480. Poul nabrone Dolmen is about 7.6km (4.7 miles) from the turn. Distance: 14.6km (9 miles).

3 ★ Poul nabrone Dolmen. This portal tomb is an exquisitely preserved, prehistoric site made all the more peculiar and arresting by the karst landscape in which it sits. Its dolmen (or stone table) is huge, and surrounded by a natural pavement of rocks. The tomb has been dated back 5,000 years. When it was excavated in the 1980s, the remains of 16 people were found. The greatest mystery remains how the gigantic boulders were



> Learn about falconry or meet an owl at the new Burren Birds of Prey Centre at Aillwee Cave.



moved and lifted—the capstone alone weighs 5 tons. You'll have no trouble finding this sight—just look for all the tour buses. At times they literally block the road. ☉ 1 hr. R480 8km (5 miles) south of the Aillwee Cave.

Continue on the R480 and turn right onto the N67. Follow the signs to Aillwee Cave, just outside Ballyvaughan. 9.5km (5.9 miles).

4 ★★ kids Aillwee Cave. This deep cave was undiscovered for thousands of years until a local herdsman followed a dog into it in 1940. Inside he found a huge cavern with 1,000m (3,280 ft.) of passages running straight into the heart of a mountain. He kept his find to himself for decades before eventually spreading the word. Explorers later uncovered its magnificent bridged chasms, deep caverns, a frozen waterfall, and bear pits—hollows scraped out by hibernating brown bears. (Brown bears have been extinct in Ireland for 10,000 years.) Guided tours are excellent here—generally led by geology students from area universities. There's a scary moment when they turn out the lights for a minute so you can experience the depth of the darkness inside. Tours last approximately 30 minutes and run continuously. Also on-site is the new **Burren Birds of Prey Centre** (☎ 065/707-7036; www.birdofpreycentre.com), a working aviary designed to mimic the natural habitat of the buzzards, falcons, eagles, and owls that live there. ☉ 45 min. Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/707-7036. www.aillweecave.ie. Joint tickets with Bird of Prey Centre €17 adults, €15 seniors and students, €10 kids, €39 families. Daily Feb–June and Sept to mid-Nov 10am–5:30pm; daily July–Aug 10am–6:30pm; closed mid-Nov to Feb.

Take the R480 north. Turn right onto the N67. At Bealaclogga, turn right onto the country road to Sheshia and Oughtmama and follow signs to Corcomroe Abbey. 14km (8½ miles).

5 ★★ Corcomroe Abbey. Set jewel-like in a languid, green valley bounded by rolling hills, the jagged ruins of this Cistercian abbey are breathtaking and well worth the long walk to get there. The abbey was founded in 1194 by Donal Mór O'Brien, and his grandson, a former king of Thomond, is entombed in the abbey's northern wall. There are some interesting medieval and Romanesque carvings in the stone, including one of a bishop with a crosier. Corcomroe is a lonely spot, except for Easter morning, when people come from miles around to celebrate Mass. We hear it's quite a sight if you happen to be around. ☉ 15 min. Near Oughtmama, Co. Clare. Free admission. Just off the main Galway rd. to the Ballyvaughan rd. (N67).

Backtrack to the N67 and turn left. Enter Lisdoonvarna.

6 Lisdoonvarna. If you've been looking for love in all the wrong places, clearly you've never been to Lisdoonvarna. This County Clare town lives for *l'amour*. There's a Matchmaker Pub on the main street (inside the Imperial Hotel on the High St.; no phone); two local residents call themselves professional matchmakers (Willie Daly, a horse dealer, and James White, a hotelier); and every autumn, the town hosts the month-long Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival (www.matchmakerireland.com). Thousands of lovelorn singletons come in search of The One, and locals cheer them on. Up and down each street, every atmospheric corner is used for mixers and minglers. Residents stir the pot by hosting romantic breakfasts, dinners, games, and dances. So good are their intentions and so charming is their belief in true love—in the idea that there really is somebody out there for everybody, and that they should all come together in a far-flung corner of western Ireland to find one another—that you may fall for it. ☉ Half-day.

To get to Galway City from Lisdoonvarna, take the N67 northeast. Turn left at the junction with the N18. 65km (40 miles).

Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.

> *The Cistercian monks called Corcomroe Abbey "Sancta Maria de Petra Fertilis," or St. Mary of the Fertile Rock.*

The Clare Coast

Coastal Clare is hallmarked by towering cliffs that plunge hundreds of feet into inky blue sea waters. Sheep gorge on grass, uninterested in the view, as tourists put their lives in jeopardy to get that picture. There are beautiful stretches of creamy sand beaches as well, and some good waves for surfers. We love the castle towers that appear out of nowhere, abandoned here and there in what is now pastureland, home only to birds. The tiny villages and scenic points along the coast have quirky names such as Puffing Hole, Intrinsic Bay, Elephant's Teeth, Mutton Island, and Lover's Leap.



> *If you're intrepid enough to surf in Ireland, you'll definitely want a wet suit.*

START Doolin, 39km (24 miles) from Ennis.
TRIP LENGTH 105km (65 miles).

1 ★★ Doolin. Doolin's old pubs and restaurants ring with the sound of fiddle and accordion all year long, which has earned this secluded fishing village a reputation as the unofficial capital of Irish traditional music. Most famous among them is probably **Gus O'Connor's Pub** (Fisher St.; ☎ 065/707-4168), which is set among a row of thatched fisherman's cottages, about a 10-minute walk from the seafront. Great though the *craic* is here, the pub's reputation inevitably draws crowds, and it can get packed to the rafters on a busy night. If you're looking for something a little more authentic, head up the road to **McGann's** (Roadford; ☎ 065/707-4133); it's less famous but not so unrelentingly jammed as Gus O'Connors. In fact, on many nights, there are no locals in Gus's at all—they're all here, downing

pints of Guinness and listening to the fiddles. Feel free to join them. Doolin is also where you catch a ferry to the **Aran Islands** (p 300).

From Doolin, take the R479 to the R478 and turn right. Follow signs for the Cliffs of Moher. 15km (9½ miles).

2 ★ kids Cliffs of Moher. The cries of nesting seabirds are faintly audible amid the roar of the Atlantic crashing against the base of these cliffs that undulate for 8km (5 miles) along the coast, some towering as high as 214m (702 ft.) over the sea. On a clear day, you can see the Aran Islands in Galway Bay as misty shapes in the distance. Look the other way, and you'll see a constant throng of tour buses and cars and tacky souvenir stalls set up along the footpath. For a more peaceful experience, arrive after the new visitor center closes. It mars the landscape, incites

- 1 Doolin
- 2 Cliffs of Moher
- 3 Lahinch Surf School
- 4 Scattery Island



greater crowding, and adds little to the natural wonders. The high price to park at the cliffs has nearly doubled over the last 2 years, and we suspect it will rise higher with all the hype. ⌚ 20 min. Near Lahinch, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/708-6146. www.cliffsofmoher.ie. Atlantic Edge exhibition €5 adults, €4 seniors & students, €3 children 4-12, free for children 3 and under, €14 families. Mar & Oct 9am-6pm; Apr 9am-6:30pm; May 9am-7pm; Jul-Aug 8:30am-8:30pm; Sept 8:30am-6:30pm; Nov-Feb 9am-5pm. R478, 11km (6¾ miles) north of Lahinch.

Rejoin the R478 south to Lahinch.

3 ★ Lahinch Surf School. If you've always wanted to try surfing, here's your chance. The Lahinch Surf School is run by championship surfers, and they specialize in getting people suited up and out on the waves—regardless of their experience level. The staff is friendly, and surfing is good for you, judging by the looks of them. Wet suits, surfboards, and lessons included. Rates start at €100 for private lessons (group lessons are cheaper). Lahinch Beach Promenade, Lahinch, Co. Clare. ☎ 087/960-9667. www.lahinchsurfschool.com.

Take the N67 south. Stay on this road through Milltown Malbay. Shortly after Clonadrum,

take the R483 to Kilrush and catch a ferry to Scattery Island. 50km (31 miles).

4 ★ Scattery Island. This unspoiled island in the Shannon Estuary near Kilrush has atmospheric monastic ruins dating from the 6th century. A high, round tower and several churches are all that remain of an extensive settlement that was founded by St. Senan. To visit the island, contact one of the boat operators who arrange the 20-minute ferry rides. Frequency depends on demand, and even in summer there may be only one trip per day. Or at the information center in Kilrush, just past the pier, ask when the next ferry departs. ⌚ 1 hr. 30 min. Information Center, Merchants Quay, Kilrush, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/905-1577 (Kilrush Tourism Office); ☎ 065/682-9100 (Ennis Friary). Free admission. Ferry €12 round-trip. Mid-June to mid-Sept daily 10:30am-6:30pm.

To return to Galway City from Kilrush, take the N68 to Ennis, then the N18 north to Galway. 112km (70 miles).

Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.

Counties Galway & Clare with Kids

The kids will be amazed by this region's natural wonders.

The Cliffs of Moher tend to impress the little ones, and they can go fishing in Galway or clamber through a cairn in County Clare. When the natural wonders cease to dazzle, you can take them to Bunratty Castle or spend an afternoon at Seaworld in Lahinch, where floppy fish and squishy rays get up close and personal.



> Plenty of outfits will take you pony trekking in Connemara (p 329).

START Bunratty. TRIP LENGTH 229km (142 miles).

1 ★★ Bunratty Castle & Folk Park (Bunratty).

Stalwart beside the O'Garney River, this exceptionally complete castle from 1425 is the center of a historical theme park; by day, the inner chambers and grounds are open for tours, and at night, the Great Hall serves as a candlelit setting for boisterous medieval banquets. The adjoining

folk park re-creates a 19th-century Irish village, complete with an entire street—including school, post office, pub, grocery store, and hotel—all open for browsing and shopping. Fresh scones are baked in the cottages, and craftspeople ply such trades as knitting, weaving, candle making, pottery, and photography. In the summer there's a *céilidh* (traditional Irish party) in the folk park nightly. The evening starts with a three-course meal, followed by a 40-minute show of storytelling, folk music, and dancing (7pm nightly; €48 adults, €24–€40 kids; call ahead to book).

⌚ Half-day. Limerick-Ennis rd. (N18), Bunratty, Co. Clare. ☎ 061/361511. www.shannonheritage.com. Admission €15.75 adults, €10.50 students, €9.45 seniors & children, €33.60 families. Sept–May 9am–5:30pm (last admission to folk park 4:15pm); Jun–Aug Mon–Fri 9am–5:30, Sat–Sun 9am–6pm (last admission to folk park 5:15pm).

Take the N18 north. Bypass Ennis on the N85 and take the N68 southwest to Kilrush. From Kilrush, take the N67 northwest to Garrun. Turn left onto the R487 to Carrigaholt. 87.3km (54.2 miles).

2 ★ **Shannon Estuary Dolphinwatch (Carrigaholt).** The Shannon Estuary is home to about 70 bottlenose dolphins, one of four dolphin species native to Europe. This company runs daily cruises to look for them in their natural habitat. ⌚ Half-day. Carrigaholt, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/905-8156. www.dolphinwatch.ie. €24 adults, €12 kids 15 & under. Advance booking essential.

Continue on the R487, looping back up to Kilkee. Continue on the N67 northeast to Lahinch. 56.4km (35 miles).



- 1 Bunratty Castle & Folk Park
- 2 Shannon Estuary Dolphinwatch
- 3 Lahinch Seaworld & Leisure Centre
- 4 Connemara National Park

3 ★ Lahinch Seaworld & Leisure Centre (Lahinch). This small but well-designed aquarium features slithery conger eels, ferocious sharks, and rubbery rays. The touch pool lets kids get up close and personal with sea creatures, and at the leisure center next door, you can take to the water yourself for reasonable rates. Budget combination tickets are available. ⌚ 1 hr. The Promenade, Lahinch, Co. Clare. ☎ 065/708-1900. www.lahinchseaworld.com. Admission to aquarium or pools (same rates, but ticket doesn't cover both) €9 adults; €8 seniors, disabled visitors & students; €7 children 5-15; €5 children 2-4; €30 families. Combination ticket €14 adults; €12 seniors, disabled visitors & students; €10 children 5-15; €5 children 2-4; €40 families. Aquarium open daily 10am-6pm (last entry 5:30pm); playzone Sat-Sun 10am-6pm (last admission 5pm); pool Mon-Fri 7am-10pm, Sat-Sun 10am-7pm.

Take the N67 to Galway. Bypass town on the N6; then join the N59 northwest. At Lissoughter, turn right onto the R344, then left at the junction with N59 to Letterfrack. 164km (102 miles). Note: If the weather's bad, avoid the R344 by staying on the N59, looping around to Letterfrack.

4 Connemara National Park. There's so much to keep kids busy here. The visitor center can give you tips and general information on the park's landscape, population of wild things, and scenic walking trails. During July and August, Tuesday and Thursday are "nature days" for children; on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, there are guided walks for the whole family. But for a potent shot of the wow factor, why not take the little ones on a pony trek? The **Cleggan Riding Centre**, Cleggan (☎ 095/44746; www.cleggan-ridingcentre.com), offers treks in the park and the surrounding area (their most popular is a 3-hour ride to Omev Island at low tide). Prices start at €50. For more on pony trekking, see p 329. ⌚ 1 day. Park visitor center, Clifden-Westport rd. (N59), Letterfrack, Co. Galway. ☎ 095/41054. Park open year-round. Visitor center Apr-May and Sept to mid-Oct daily 10am-5:30pm; June daily 10am-6:30pm; July-Aug daily 9:30am-6:30pm. Visitor center closed mid-Oct to Mar.

Where to Stay & Dine

For hotels and restaurants in Galway City, see p 310, p 308; County Galway, p 338; County Clare, p 339.

Where to Stay & Dine in County Galway



> *Ballynahinch Castle is a cultural hub for anglers and poets.*

★★★ **kids Ballynahinch Castle** RECESS SEAFOOD

A former haunt of the fighting O'Flaherty chiefs and pirate Grace O'Malley, this turreted, gabled sportsman's 16th-century lodge and manor house overlooks the Owenmore River on a 140-hectare (346-acre) estate at the base of Ben Lettery. Luxurious yet casual, many guest rooms have fireplaces and four-poster beds, and all have orthopedic mattresses. The sea trout and salmon fishing is renowned; every evening, the day's catch is weighed in at the **Fishermen's Bar**—usually cause for celebration. Run by Patrick O'Flaherty, a descendant of the notorious chieftains, this inn is a cultural hub, with its own literary press and famous writers on its repeat guest list. Recess. ☎ 095/31006. www.ballynahinch-castle.com. 40 units. Double €240–€370. AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Delphi Lodge** LEENANE SEAFOOD

Informally elegant rooms in this country house are spacious and masculine with peaceful lake and mountain views. Many guests come to fish (the owner supplies gear and permits). Dinners (€50 per person) are excellent, featuring the day's catch, eaten communally. The Delphi Estate & Fishery, Leenane. ☎ 095/42222. www.delphilodge.ie. 12 units, 5 cottages. Double €200; 2- and 3-bedroom self-catering cottages 3 nights €450–€650, 1 week €800–€1,950. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily.

★★ **High Moors** CLIFDEN MODERN CONTINENTAL

This modern, homey bungalow-style restaurant has panoramic views of the Atlantic and countryside. Dishes include market-fresh classics such as breast of chicken with basil and tomato or roast leg of Connemara lamb with red currant and rosemary. Try to book a table at sunset. Off Ballyconneely Rd., Dooneen, Clifden. ☎ 095/21342. Entrees €14–€20. AE, MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sun; closed Nov–Easter.

★ **O'Dowd's Seafood Restaurant** ROUNDSTONE SEAFOOD

Overlooking the harbor, this homey, traditional restaurant, in business since 1840, delivers perhaps the best seafood in Roundstone at near-budget prices. The decor is rustic, but nobody minds, as everyone is here for the food: seafood chowder, crab claws in garlic butter, fresh oysters, steamed mussels, lobster served in the shell, and piled-high fishermen's platters. Roundstone Harbour, Connemara. ☎ 095/35809. www.odowdsrestaurant.com. Reservations recommended. Entrees €15–€25; seafood platter €35; lobster €39. AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Station House Restaurant** CLIFDEN MODERN CONTINENTAL

Locals flock to this courtyard restaurant for zesty, imaginative cooking. The chef loves rich flavors chargrilled or smoked, such as blackened turbot served with smoked oysters and grilled mushrooms. Station House Hotel, N59, Clifden. ☎ 095/21699. Entrees €18–€26. AE, MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sun; closed Oct–Apr.

Where to Stay & Dine in County Clare



> The dining room at Gregans Castle Hotel.

★ **An Fulacht Fia** BALLYVAUGHAN MODERN IRISH

Overlooking Galway Bay, this gorgeous restaurant with a creative and discerning menu is renowned throughout the region, but almost all ingredients are sourced within the Burren. Dishes may include pistachio-crusted Burren rack of lamb with juniper berries and thyme *jus* or hazelnut-coated salmon filet with leeks and citrus butter. The wine list is excellent though pricey. Coast Rd., Ballyvaughan. ☎ 065/707-7300. www.anfulachtfia.ie. Reservations recommended. Entrees €19–€25, early-bird dinners €25–€30. MC, V.

★ **Aran View House** DOOLIN

Built in 1736, this rambling stone house on a hill surrounded by farmland affords panoramic views of the Clare coastline. The decor is old-fashioned, with colorful carpets and mahogany furnishings, but rooms are big and comfortable—some have four-poster beds. There are self-catering cottages. Doolin. ☎ 065/707-4420. www.aranview.com. 19 units. Double €90–€110. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

★★ **Ballinalacken Castle Country House**

DOOLIN On a hill overlooking the Aran Islands, this 1840 hotel isn't a castle, but it's near the ruins of Ballinalacken Castle. Most rooms are in a modern wing, but the old house rooms have high ceilings and marble fireplaces; room no. 16 has sweeping sea views. Doolin. ☎ 065/707-4025. www.ballinalackencastle.com. 12 units. Double €130–€160; suites €180–€200. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr 15.

★★ **Barrtrá Seafood Restaurant** LAHINCH

SEAFOOD With wonderful sunset views over Liscannor Bay, this reliably good restaurant features fresh seafood and dishes such as sirloin steak with onion and pepper sauce, and gnocchi with regatta (vegan) cheese, tomatoes, and spinach. Barrtrá, Lahinch. ☎ 065/708-1280. www.barrtra.com. Fixed-price dinner €42; entrees €18–€25. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily 6–10pm. Off season call ahead.

★★★ **The Cherry Tree Restaurant** KILLALOE

MODERN CONTINENTAL This restaurant recently

won prestigious European awards. Dishes begin with fine local ingredients—Comeragh lamb, Dinish Island scallops—and from there, every hint of cream or garnish is cleverly conceived. Lakeside, Ballina, Killaloe. ☎ 061/375688. www.cherrytreerestaurant.ie. Entrees €24–€30; fixed-price 3-course dinner €39, 2-course €32. AE, MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sat; lunch Sun.

Doonmacelim Guest House DOOLIN Near Gus O'Connor's Pub, this modern two-story guesthouse is close to everything but surrounded by a farm. Guest rooms are unremarkable with nice country views. Doolin. ☎ 087/125-0303. www.doonmacelim.com. 8 units. Double €70. MC, V.

★ **Fergus View** COROFIN

Rolling hills and gardens are visible from this rambling house. Rooms are sweet if small, but owner Mary Kelleher makes guests feel right at home, and her knowledge of the area can inform your trip planning. Kilnaboy, Corofin. ☎ 065/683-7606. www.fergusview.com. Double €72. No credit cards. Closed late Oct to Easter. 3.2km (2 miles) north of Corofin on road to Kilfenora.

★★★ **Gregans Castle Hotel** BALLYVAUGHAN *IRISH COUNTRY HOUSE* This cozy, bright stone manor house with spectacular views is one of Clare's best hotels, with a growing reputation for serving some of the country's finest food as well. Guest rooms are elegant with comfortable, orthopedic beds. Play croquet, gather around the lounge fire, and don't miss the excellent dinner. Ballyvaughan-Lisdoonvarna rd. (N67), Ballyvaughan. ☎ 065/707-7005. www.gregans.ie. 22 units. Double €195–€320; suites from €295; kids with adults €50 age 13–17, €30 age 6–12, and €20 5 & under. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

Lakeside Hotel KILLALOE

On the southern banks of Lough Derg, shaded by ancient trees, this two-story country house-style hotel has a lovely setting—its greatest selling point. Guest rooms could do with a modest facelift, and breakfast is underwhelming; but the views of the lake and gardens are stunning. Stipulate a lake view, although they cost extra. The excellent on-site leisure center is a big attraction for families; among its facilities are two kids' pools, a

waterslide, and a crèche. Killaloe, County Clare. ☎ 800/447-7462 in the U.S., or 061/376122. Fax 061/376431. www.lakeside-killaloe.com. 46 units. Double €100–120, €20 supplement for lake views. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V.

★★ **Kids Loop Head Lightkeeper's House** LOOP HEAD This self-catering Irish Landmark Trust property sleeps six and has astonishing views next to an old lighthouse 20 minutes by car from old-fashioned, bustling Kilkee. There is no TV, but there is a radio. Guests should bring their own bottled water. Loop Head, near Kibaha. Contact the Irish Landmark Trust, ☎ 01/670-4733. www.irishlandmark.com. €400 for 4 nights in low season to €1,000 per week in high season. AE, MC, V at booking.

★★★ **Moy House** LAHINCH

This beautiful 19th-century tower house overlooks the bay. Beds are covered in crisp Irish linens and decorated with original art and antiques. Extra touches include L'Occitane bath products. Dinners made from fresh, local produce are worth the splurge. Check for fall and spring specials. Miltown Malbay Rd., Lahinch. ☎ 065/708-2800. www.moyhouse.com. 9 units. Double €185–€280; suites €270–€360. 4-course dinner €55. AE, DC, MC, V. Dinner daily.

★ **Rusheen Lodge** BALLYVAUGHAN

This award-winning, bungalow-style guesthouse is surrounded by flowers. The innkeeper's grandfather discovered the nearby Aillwee Cave. Rooms are simple with blond woods and firm beds covered in floral fabric. Breakfast can include fresh local fish. Knocknagrough, Ballyvaughan. ☎ 065/707-7092. www.rusheenlodge.com. 9 units. Double €90–€100. AE, MC, V.

Kids Stonecutters Kitchen DOOLIN *BISTRO*

This chirpy restaurant in Doolin is pitched straight at families. The crowd-pleasing menu includes good, hearty staples such as fish pies, tasty stews, and hamburgers. Kids can either order special kids items or half-size adult portions, and there's a play area too. You might not like this place if your kid-tolerance isn't high. Doolin, County Clare. ☎ 065/707-5962. www.stonecutterskitchen.com. Entrees €10–€14. Kids menu entrees €5–€10. MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily (call ahead off-season).

Galway & Clare Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR **Aer Arann** flies from Dublin into Galway Airport (Carnmore, about 16km/10 miles east of Galway City; ☎ 091/755569; www.aerarann.ie or www.galwayairport.com) four times daily. There's also regular service to Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh. **BY**

TRAIN **Irish Rail** trains from Dublin and other points arrive daily at Ceannt Station in Galway City off Eyre Square (☎ 091/561444; www.irishrail.ie). Most small towns in Galway are not served by trains. **BY BUS** Buses from all parts of Ireland arrive daily at Bus Éireann Travel Centre, Ceannt Station, Galway (☎ 091/562000; www.buseireann.ie). They also provide daily service to Clifden and other small towns. **BY CAR** National roads lead in from all parts of Ireland: the N84 and N17 from the north points, N63 and N6 from the east, and N67 and N18 from the south. The best way to get around Connemara is to drive, following N59 from Moycullen and Oughterard.

ATMs/Cashpoints

Cash machines are scarce outside Galway City, which has several banks in Eyre Square with ATMs and currency exchange desks: Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, and Ulster Bank. In Clifden, there's an Allied Irish Bank (AIB) and a Bank of Ireland on the Courthouse Square.

Currency Exchange

There's a currency exchange desk at the airport. Most major hotels will change money for their guests, as will large banks. In the countryside currency exchange options are rare.

Dentists & Doctors

In emergencies dial ☎ 999. **DOCTORS** **Crescent Medical Centre**, 4 The Crescent, Galway City (☎ 091/582321); **Dr. Catherine O'Loughlin**, Fisher Street, Doolin (☎ 065/707-4990); or **The Clinic**, Westport Road, Clifden (☎ 095/21224). **DENTISTS** **Smiles Dental Spa**, 21 Middle St., Galway City (☎ 091/575007); or the **Clifden Dental Practise**, Station House, Galway Road, Clifden (☎ 095/22731).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ 999 for police, ambulance, fire, or coast guard.

Internet Access

Hotlines, 4 High St., Galway City (☎ 091/562838), offers Internet access and low-cost international phone calls, open daily. Internet service in the country is rare. In Clifden, try the **Two Dog Café**, Church Hill, Clifden (☎ 095/22186; www.twodogcafe.ie).

Pharmacies

If you need a drugstore, try **Matt O'Flaherty Chemist**, 16 William St., Galway City (☎ 091/561442, or after hours 091/525426), or the **Clifden Pharmacy**, Main Street, Clifden (☎ 095/21821).

Police

Galway City Garda, Mill Street (☎ 091/538000). **Ballyvaughan Garda**, town center (☎ 065/707-7002).

Post Office

GALWAY CITY Eglinton Street (☎ 091/534727), open Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm.

Public Transportation

Counties Galway and Clare are not well served by public transportation. From Galway City, **Bus Éireann** (☎ 091/562000; www.buseireann.ie) runs daily service to Clifden and small towns en route.

Taxis

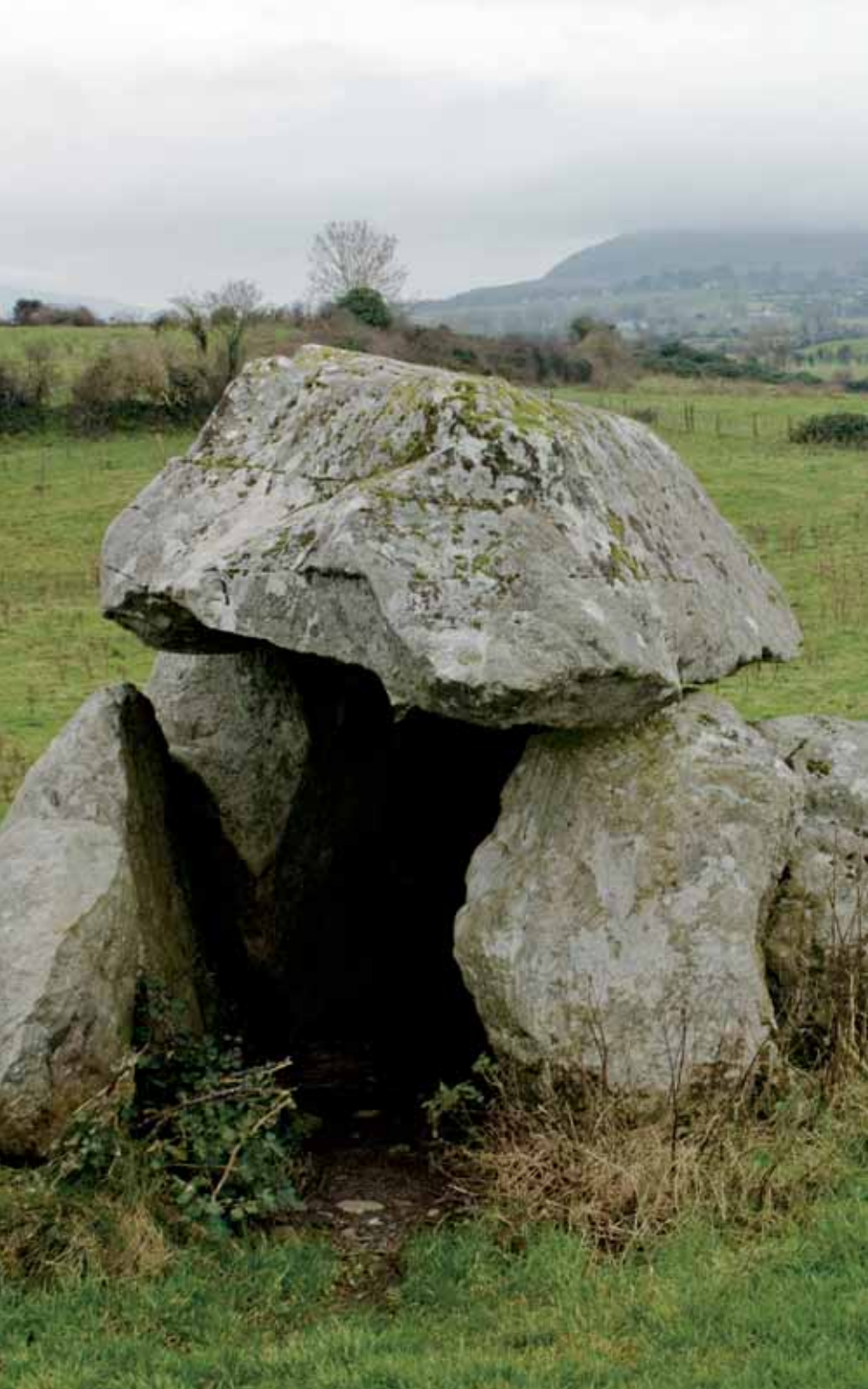
GALWAY CITY **Abby Taxis** (☎ 091/533333) or **Connemara Taxi Company** (☎ 095/30000). Taxis in small towns and villages are rare.

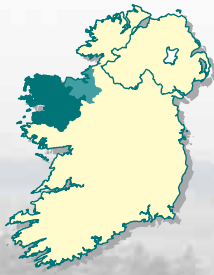
Toilets

Public toilets in small towns are rare. Your best bet is to use the facilities at museums, other tourist sites, or pubs.

Visitor Information

Ireland West Tourism (Aras Fáilte), Foster Street, Galway City (☎ 091/537700); **Oughterard Tourist Office**, Main Street, Oughterard (☎ 091/552808); **Clifden Tourist Office**, Market Street, Clifden (☎ 095/21163), summer only.





11

Counties Sligo & Mayo

Counties Sligo & Mayo in 3 Days

Like Galway, Mayo is marked by dramatic scenery, terminating in rocky cliffs that plunge into the roiling, icy Atlantic. Farther north, you'll reach the smooth pastures and functional farm communities of County Sligo. This is the landscape that soothed the soul and inspired the verse of Ireland's first Nobel Laureate, William Butler Yeats. Its unspoiled marvels are still a healing tonic—though the region is rich with fairy-tale castles and mysterious prehistoric sites, its biggest gift to the visitor is tranquillity.



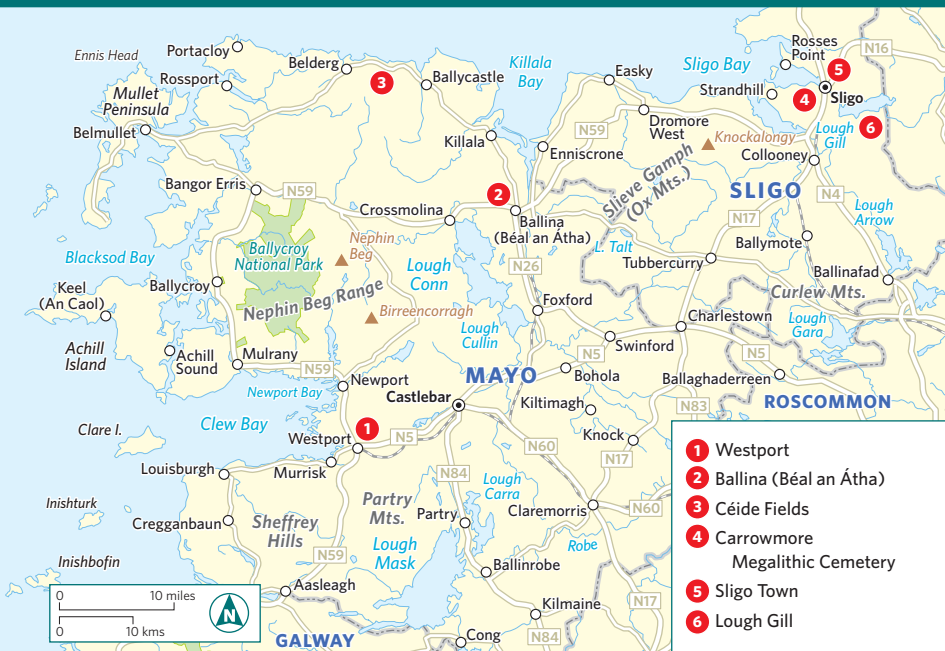
> *PREVIOUS PAGE* The dolmens at Carrowmore were megalithic graves. *THIS PAGE* The painstakingly restored 13th-century Sligo Abbey.

START Westport. TRIP LENGTH 139km (86 miles).

1 ★★ kids Westport. Richard Castle designed this 18th-century seaside resort town, with its tree-lined mall and Georgian architecture. Home of the marquess of Sligo, a descendant of Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley (p 360), Castle's **Westport House** is open to the public. It's a great place to spend a few hours—especially if you have kids. Press ahead to Ballina for the night. ☀ 1 day. See p 358.

Leave Westport on the N5, joining the R310 north at Castlebar to Ballina. 53km (33 miles).

2 ★ Ballina (Béal an Átha). County Mayo's largest town, Ballina makes an excellent stopover for the night. Nearby are two stunning ecclesiastical ruins, the 15th-century **Moyné Abbey** and the better preserved **Rosserk Abbey**. They're in equally serene settings, a couple of miles apart, near Ballina on the road to **Céide Fields** (p 345); so plan to stop on the



way out of town the morning of your second day. ⌚ Half-day. See p 366.

Head north on the R314 and follow signs to Céide Fields. 35km (22 miles).

3 ★★ Céide Fields. Start early, because this day will be a long one during which you'll visit two of the world's greatest prehistoric sites. First stop is Céide Fields—the extraordinary remains of 5,000-year-old farm fields, megalithic tombs, and a village preserved for millennia beneath a bog. In a stunning cliff-top location overlooking the crashing surf of the Atlantic, the site wasn't excavated until the 1970s. It's fascinating and the visitor center does an excellent job of bringing it all to life. ⌚ Half-day. Céide Fields is on the R314 coastal road north of Ballina, between Ballycastle and Belderrig. ☎ 096/43325. Admission €3.70 adults, €2.60 seniors, €1.50 students and children. Open mid-March to May and Oct-Nov daily 10am–5pm; June–Sept daily 10am–6pm.

Backtrack to Ballina and take the N59 east. Follow signs to Carrowmore, about 4km (2½ miles) outside Sligo Town. 92km (57 miles).

4 ★★ Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. Some of these ancient stone tombs near Sligo Town predate Stonehenge and the Egyptian

Pyramids. Spend the night in Sligo Town or at one of the lovely hotels and B&Bs in the countryside nearby. ⌚ Half-day. See p 354, **2**.

From Carrowmore, head north on the country roads toward Carrowmore village and Sligo Town. Turn right on the R292. 5km (3 miles).

5 ★ Sligo Town. Sligo Town isn't particularly pretty or historic, but it's worth a couple hours of exploration on the morning of your third day. Start by checking out the **Sligo County Museum**, the **Yeats Memorial Building**, and **Sligo Abbey**—they're all within a couple of blocks of each other. ⌚ Half-day. For details see p 350.

6 ★★ Lough Gill. After lunch, head just outside Sligo to the beautiful Lough Gill. The **Lough Gill Drive** is another of Ireland's best scenic routes, but it takes a few hours to complete properly (see p 374 for a minitour). Alternatively, you could take a boat trip out to the island of **Innisfree**, made famous by W. B. Yeats (p 374). ⌚ Half-day.

Where to Stay & Dine

In Westport, see p 361; in Ballina, see p 369; in Sligo Town, see p 357.

Counties Sligo & Mayo in 1 Week

Ancient sites and wild landscapes, including a particularly gorgeous stretch of shoreline, are the main attractions of this itinerary. A full week affords you the time to explore the region at a leisurely pace. Parts of Mayo are in the Gaeltacht—or Irish-language section of Ireland—so we'll include the Irish names where necessary to help you avoid confusion.



> A sign on Achill Island in the Gaeltacht says, “The sea spends its day ebbing and flowing.”

START Cong is just off the R345, 42km (26 miles) northwest of Galway City. **TRIP LENGTH** 367km–406km (228–252 miles).

1 ★ Cong. This village near the border of Galway is a sweet little place, worthy of a detour. The ruined **Cong Abbey** is fetching, although most visitors come to see a stone cottage that was a key location for the 1951 John Ford film, *The Quiet Man*, starring John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara. (Sadly, there’s

almost nothing left; callous souvenir hunters have taken it apart over the years, stone by stone. Please don’t do as they did.) ☹ Half-day. For more information, contact the Cong Tourist Office. ☎ 94/954-6542.

From Cong, join the main N54 road (a few miles north of the town) and head north. Turn off onto the R330 at Ballynanerroon toward Westport. 44km (27 miles).



2 ★★ kids Westport. Mayo's loveliest town is worth exploring for the rest of the day. After lunch, head over to **Westport House**—a fine 18th-century mansion with plenty to keep kids busy. Spend the night in Westport. 🕒 Half-day. For details on Westport, see p 358.

Leave Westport on the R335, heading west to Roonagh. Catch a ferry to Clare Island. 34km (21 miles).

3 ★★ Clare Island. Floating about 5km (3 miles) off the Mayo coast, just beyond Clew Bay, Clare Island is a place of unspoiled splendor. Set aside the whole day to explore it at a fittingly slow pace before heading back to Westport for a second night. 🕒 1 day. For details on Clare Island, see p 360.

Take the N59 out of Westport, branching off onto the R319 at Mallaranny. Cross to Achill Island, continuing on to Keel. 59km (37 miles).

4 ★★ Achill Island (An Caol). Set aside another full day to discover this beautiful, rugged, bog-filled island. More adventurous travelers won't want to leave without seeing

the deserted village on Mount Slievemore. You can spend the night on the island or return to Westport. 🕒 1 day. For more on Achill Island, see p 364.

From Westport, take the N5 east. At Castlebar, join the R310 north to Ballina. 53km (33 miles). From Keel on Achill Island, take the R319 back to the mainland and then the N59 east. At Newport, join the R317 northeast, then the R312, R316, and N59 up to Ballina. 92km (57 miles).

5 ★ Ballina (Béal an Átha). This town's best attractions are slightly out of town. A short drive to the north will bring you to two atmospheric ruin sites, **Moyné Abbey** and **Rosserk Abbey**. The **Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre** is worth a tour, and if you have roots in this part of the world, you'll want to check out the **Mayo North Heritage Centre** on Lough Conn. Spend the night in Ballina. 🕒 1 day. For details on Ballina, see p 366.

Head north on the R314 and follow signs to Céide Fields. 35km (22 miles).



> **THIS PAGE** Visit the working mills at Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre before popping in to shop.

OPPOSITE PAGE Travel back in time at the ancient graves of Carrowkeel.

6 ★★ Céide Fields. After spending the night in Ballina, start early, as you've got some distance to cover today. First up is this extraordinary cliff-top seaside prehistoric site. ⌚ Half-day. For details see p 345.

Backtrack to Ballina and get on the N59 east. Follow signs to Carrowmore, about 4km (2½ miles) outside Sligo Town. 92km (57 miles).

7 ★★★ Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. Near Sligo Town, these ancient stone tombs are nearly 6,000 years old. ⌚ Half-day. For more information, see p 354.

From Carrowmore, head north on the country roads toward Carrowmore village and Sligo Town. Turn right on the R292. 5km (3 miles).

8 ★ Sligo Town. After spending the night at one of the B&Bs in the nearby countryside, spend the day exploring the **Sligo County Museum**, the **Yeats Memorial Building**, and **Sligo Abbey**. In the afternoon, head slightly out of town, to **Drumcliff** and Yeats's grave. ⌚ 1 day. For details on Sligo Town and its environs, see p 350.

Head out of Sligo on the R286 southeast. At Cloghmore, branch right to Lough Gill. 7.3km (4½ miles).

9 ★★ Lough Gill. Spend a few hours exploring this beautiful scenic drive at your own pace; then take a boat trip out to W. B. Yeats's beloved island of **Innisfree**. Boat trips leave from Parke's Castle, on the north shore of Lough Gill. ⌚ 2 hrs. For a daylong scenic drive of Lough Gill, see p 374.

From Parke's Castle, take the R286 west. Merge with the N16; then take the N4 south. Follow signs for Carrowkeel. 38km (24 miles).

10 ★★★ Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery. On the final day of your weeklong tour, drive out to the region's third blockbuster prehistoric site—the mountaintop Neolithic cemetery Carrowkeel. It's a peaceful, dignified place, well worth the 20 minutes it takes to hike there from the makeshift parking lot. ⌚ 1 hr. For more on Carrowkeel, see p 354, **1**.

To return to Sligo Town, take the N4 north. 28km (18 miles).



Sligo Town

Sligo Town is a handy base for exploring the bucolic farmland of the surrounding countryside—known by travel agents and guidebook writers the world over as “Yeats Country.” Although he was born in Dublin, in 1865, W. B. Yeats spent so much time in County Sligo that it became a part of him, and he a part of it—literally, as he is buried here. Every hill, cottage, vale, and lake seems to bear a plaque indicating its relation to the Nobel-winning poet, dramatist, and two-term Irish senator.

START **Sligo Town is on the N4, 139km (86 miles) north of Galway Town, and on the N15, 65km (40 miles) south of Donegal.**

1 ★ Model Arts Centre and Niland Gallery.

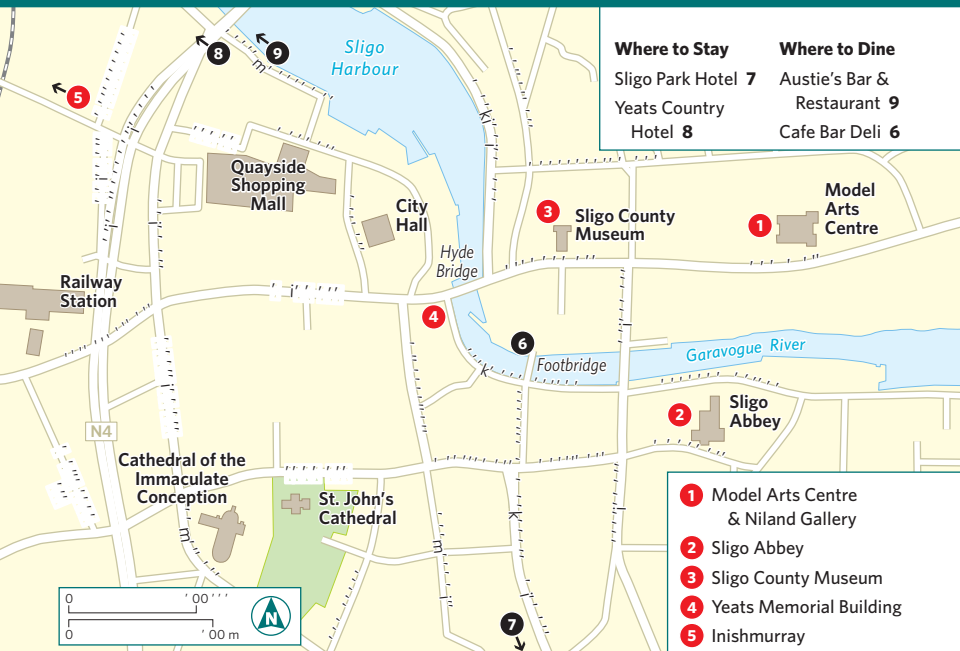
The M.A.C. is a popular venue for touring shows and local exhibits by artists, sculptors, writers, and musicians. In the summer, there are often poetry readings and arts lectures (many are free) and a varied program of film screenings by the Sligo Film Society. At this writing, the center was closed for a major redevelopment, which we’re concerned to discover involves a rather stark, modernist extension to the 19th-century schoolhouse building in which all the activity used to take place. Outward appearances aside, however, the plans seem progressive, including the creation of new performance spaces and galleries, an improved restaurant, and better wheelchair access.

It’s scheduled to open in 2010; call ahead or visit the website for details. ☎ 30 min.–2 hr., depending on event. The Mall. ☎ 071/914-1405. www.modelart.ie. Free admission. Readings and lectures free–€10, depending on artist. Tues–Sun 11am–6pm; evening events 8pm.

2 ★ Sligo Abbey. Founded as a Dominican house in 1252 by Maurice Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare, Sligo Abbey was the center of early Sligo Town. It thrived for centuries and flourished in medieval times when it was the burial place of the chiefs and earls of Sligo. But, as with other affluent religious settlements, the abbey was under constant attack, and it was finally destroyed in 1641. Much restoration work has been done in recent years, and the cloisters contain outstanding examples of stone carving; the 15th-century altar is one of few intact medieval altars in Ireland. ☎ 30 min.

> *The William Butler Yeats-centric Sligo County Museum has first editions of the author’s complete works.*





> Sligo Abbey was once the center of 13th-century Sligo Town.



> The Yeats Memorial Building, home of the Yeats Society, is located just off Hyde Bridge in Sligo Town.

Abbey St. ☎ 071/914-6406. Tickets €2.10 adults, €1.30 seniors, €1.10 students and kids. Mid-Mar to Oct daily 10am–6pm; Nov to mid-Dec Fri–Sun 9:30am–4:30pm. Closed mid-Dec to mid-Mar.

3 ★★ Sligo County Museum. In a 19th-century church mansion, this museum has quite a good exhibit related to Sligo's Stone Age history and archaeological finds in the area. Leaping forward centuries, another section is devoted to the Yeats family, with a display of William Butler Yeats's complete works in first editions, poems on broadsheets, letters, and his Nobel prize for literature (1923)—Ireland's first. There's also a collection of oils, watercolors, and drawings by Jack B. Yeats (W. B. Yeats's brother) and John B. Yeats (William and Jack's father). There is a permanent collection of 20th-century Irish art, including works by Paul Henry and Evie Hone. ⌚ 1 hr. Stephen St.. ☎ 071/914-2212. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–noon and 2–4:50pm. Closed Oct–May.

4 ★ Yeats Memorial Building. In a 19th-century red-brick Victorian building, this

memorial contains an extensive library with items of special interest to Yeats scholars. The building is also headquarters of the **Yeats International Summer School** (p 470) and the **Sligo Art Gallery**, which exhibits works by local, national, and international artists. The latest addition is a handy cafe. ⌚ Upwards of 30 min. Douglas Hyde Bridge. ☎ 071/914-2693. www.yeats-sligo.com. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9:30am–5pm.

5 ★ Inishmurray. Northwest of Sligo Bay, 6km (3¾ miles) offshore, lies this tiny, uninhabited island. It encompasses the haunting ruins of St. Molaise, a very early monastic settlement founded in the 6th century and destroyed by the Vikings in 807. Within its circular walls are the remains of several churches, beehive cells, altars, and an assemblage of “cursing stones” once used to bring ruin on those who presumably deserved it. For transportation to the island, ask at the tourism office, or call **Joe McGowan** (☎ 087/254-0190; joemcgowan@sligoheritage.com) or **Keith Clarke** (☎ 087/667-4522). ⌚ 1½ hr.

Where to Stay & Dine in Sligo Town



> *The heated indoor pool at the Yeats Country Hotel.*

★★ **Austie's Bar and Restaurant** *SEAFOOD*

On a hill with lovely views of Sligo Bay, this pub-restaurant is filled with nautical knick-knacks, fishnets, periscopes, and paintings of sailing ships. Substantial pub grub is available during the day—open-faced sandwiches of crab, salmon, or smoked mackerel; crab claw or mixed-seafood salads; and hearty soups and chowders. The dinner menu offers such fresh seafood choices as pan-fried Dover sole and crab au gratin, as well as steaks and chicken curry. Lobster is also available, at market prices. You can sit outside on picnic tables if the weather's fine. Rosses Point Rd. (6.5km/4 miles northwest of Sligo), Rosses Point. ☎ 071/917-7111. Entrees €10–€27. MC, V. Dinner Mon–Sat, lunch Sun 12:30–3:30pm.

★ **Cafe Bar Deli** *MEDITERRANEAN*

This small Irish chain is always reliable for simple yet sophisticated cuisine in relaxed, attractive surroundings. Good salads include one with goat cheese, beets, and walnuts, and there's a lengthy menu of stone-baked pizzas and plenty of light, healthy pasta dishes. This is just the place for when you need a break from lamb, beef, and the like. 15 Rear Stephen's St. ☎ 071/914-0100. Entrees €10–€13. MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sun.

★ **Sligo Park Hotel**

With a glass-fronted facade and sky-lit atrium lobby, this is Sligo's most contemporary

hotel, set back from the road amid sprawling parkland, with distant views of Ben Bulbin to the north. The decor in the guest rooms is generic but inoffensive, with pastel-toned floral fabrics and orthopedic beds. The leisure center is a big draw with a gorgeous indoor pool and plenty to keep you busy. Pearse Rd. (just over 1.6km/1 mile south of Sligo on the Dublin rd./N4). ☎ 071/919-0400. www.sligoparkhotel.com. 137 units. Double €135–€235. DC, MC, V.

★ **Yeats Country Hotel**

This hilltop property has sweeping views of Ben Bulbin and the sandy beaches of Sligo Bay. Slightly reminiscent of the Edwardian period, the public rooms are elegant, while guest rooms are blandly traditional in dark woods and floral bedspreads. However, the rooms are being renovated a few at a time, and those that have been updated are more tastefully decorated—ask for a renovated room when you book. There's also a great heated indoor pool and sauna. Rosses Point Rd. (8km/5 miles northwest of Sligo), Rosses Point. ☎ 071/917-7211. www.yeats-country-hotel.com. 79 units. Double €170–€190. AE, DC, MC, V.

Where to Stay & Dine

For additional hotels and restaurants just outside Sligo Town, see p 357.

Around Sligo Town

The area around Sligo Town harbored numerous ancient civilizations. Thus, it is a treasure-trove of dolmens, cairns, and passage tombs. These mysterious stone-and-dirt structures fascinate us for both their extraordinary structure and their remarkable age—they're thousands of years old. You can wander freely among them and even put your hands on the stones. There are so many that you'll spot them randomly in pastures with horses nonchalantly grazing around them as you drive near Carrowmore.



> *In the shadow of Ben Bulbin is Drumcliff Church, the final resting place for W. B. Yeats.*

START Carrowkeel is off the N4, 28km (18 miles) south of Sligo Town. **TRIP LENGTH** 55km (34 miles).

1 ★★ Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery.

Atop a hill overlooking Lough Arrow, this ancient cemetery is gorgeous, isolated, and frequently empty. Its 14 cairns, dolmens, and stone circles date from the Stone Age (c. 5000 B.C.), and it's easy to feel that history, standing among the cold, ageless rocks. The walk uphill from the parking lot takes about 20 minutes, so be ready to get a little exercise. It's worth the

effort. This is a simple site—no visitor center, no tea shop, no admission fee—nothing but ancient mystery. ⌚ 45 min. Free admission. West off the N4 (signposted on N4) between Sligo Town & Boyle, Co. Sligo.

Take the N4 back up toward Sligo. Turn left onto the R292 just after Ballysadare and follow signs for Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery. 27km (17 miles).

2 ★★★ Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery.

Here, at the dead center of the Coolera Peninsula, sits a massive passage grave that once



had a Stonehenge-like stone circle of its own. Encircling that were as many as 200 additional stone circles and passage graves arranged in an intricate and mysterious design. Over the years, some of the stones have been moved, but more than 60 circles and passage graves still exist, although the site spreads out so far that many of them are in farms adjacent to the main site. Look out for your first dolmen in a paddock next to the road about a mile before you reach the site. The dolmens were the actual graves, once covered in stones and earth. Some of these sites are open to visitors—you can get a map to them from the visitor center. On the main site, Tomb 52A (which was only excavated in 1998) is estimated to be 7,400 years old, making it the earliest known piece of free-standing stone architecture in the world. This is one of the great sacred landscapes of the ancient world. If you slowly do a full turn and study the distant mountain ranges that ring the surrounding valley, you'll notice a stone cairn in the center of each one—nipple-sized at such a great distance, but undeniable. Queen Maeve is reputedly buried in the unexcavated Knocknarea grave nearby, in clear view. It's all well presented, and the excellent visitor center

has good exhibits and guided tours. ⌚ 45 min. Carrowmore Visitors Centre (signposted on N4 and N15), Co. Sligo. ☎ 071/916-1534. Tickets €2.10 adults, €1.30 seniors, €1.10 students and kids. Daily 9:30am–6:30pm. Both visitor center and site closed Oct–Apr.

Take the country roads up to Sligo Town. Then stay on the N15 north to Drumcliff. 12km (7¾ miles).

3 ★ Drumcliff & Yeats's Grave. This small stone church is the final resting place of W. B. Yeats, and has naturally become something of a pilgrimage site for his legions of fans. As you walk into the graveyard, Yeats's grave is marked with a dark, modest stone just to the left of the church. He's buried alongside his young wife, Georgie Hyde-Lee (when they married in 1917, he was 52 and she was 23). The moving epitaph—"Cast a cold eye on life, on death . . ."—comes from his poem "Under Ben Bulbin." (Many fans consider Ben his rightful headstone.) The church sits atop the 6th-century foundations of the monastery St. Columba, and the round tower on the main road dates from that earlier building. The high cross in the churchyard is from the 11th century,

and its faded eastern side shows Christ, Daniel in the lions' den, Adam and Eve, and Cain murdering Abel. The little visitor center has a few gifts and doodads and an excellent tea shop with marvelous cakes, hearty sandwiches, and fresh hot soup. ⌚ 30 min. Drumcliff Churchyard, Drumcliff (off N15), Co. Sligo.

Go south on the N15, bypassing central Sligo on the N16, then joining the R286 east. Follow signs for Parke's Castle. 16km (10 miles).

4 ★ Parke's Castle. On the north side of the Lough Gill Drive, on the County Leitrim side of the border, Parke's Castle stands out as a lone outpost amid the natural tableau of lake view and woodland scenery. Named after an English family that gained possession of it during the 1620 plantation of Leitrim, this castle was originally the stronghold of the O'Rourke clan, rulers of the kingdom of Breffni. Beautifully restored using Irish oak and traditional craftsmanship, it exemplifies the 17th-century fortified manor house. In the visitor center, informative exhibits and a splendid audiovisual show illustrate the history of the castle and introduce visitors to the rich, diverse sites of interest in the surrounding area. Departing from outside Parke's Castle, the **Lough Gill Cruises** take you around Lough Gill and the Garavogue River aboard the 72-passenger *Wild Rose* water bus as you listen to the poetry of Yeats. Trips to the Lake Isle of Innisfree are also scheduled. An onboard bar serves refreshments. If you really love it down here, allow another couple of hours to tackle the **Lough Gill Drive** (p 374). ⌚ 3 hr., castle and cruise. Parke's Castle: Lough Gill Dr., Sligo-Dromahair rd. (R286), approx. 7 miles east of Sligo Town, Co. Sligo. ☎ 071/916-4149. Castle tickets €2.90

Poetic License

The landscape of County Sligo deeply influenced the work of Ireland's first of four Nobel laureates, William Butler Yeats (1865-1939). The poet, playwright, and two-term Irish senator grew up amid Sligo's verdant hills and dales, now known as "Yeats Country"—a moniker the tourism board won't let you forget, through signposts and plaques mounted throughout the region and a plethora of Yeats-related activities. You can cruise Lough Gill while listening to a live recital of Yeats's poetry; take Yeats trails and buy a hundred items of Yeats memorabilia; and visit dozens of his purported haunts—some purportedly haunted by his ghost and some of which have only tenuous connections with the man. Yeats died in Menton, on the French Riviera, in 1939. Knowing he was ill, he had said, "If I die here, bury me up there on the mountain, and then after a year or so, dig me up and bring me privately to Sligo." True to his wishes, in 1948 his body was moved to Sligo, and reinterred at Drumcliff Church (see p 355), where his great-grandfather had been a rector.

adults, €2.10 seniors, €1.30 students and kids. Lough Gill Cruise: ☎ 071/916-4266. www.roseofinnisfree.com. Lough Gill cruise €15 adults, €7.50 kids 11 & older. Innisfree cruise €17 adults, €8.50 kids over 10. June–Sept Lough Gill cruise daily 2:30 and 4:30pm; Innisfree tour daily 12:30, 3:30, and 6:30pm. Apr–May and Oct (Sun only) cruise and tour schedule subject to demand; call ahead.

To return to Sligo Town, backtrack along the R286 and follow signs for Sligo. 10km (6¼ miles).



➤ *The much-romanticized Lake Isle of Innisfree in its fall splendor.*

Where to Stay & Dine Around Sligo Town



➤ *Markree Castle's imposing facade.*

★★ **Cromleach Lodge** CASTLEBALDWIN

MODERN CONTINENTAL It's worth the drive 32km (20 miles) south of Sligo Town to dine at this lovely country house overlooking Lough Arrow. The panoramic views are secondary, however, to Chef Moira Tighe's food, which has won a fistful of prestigious awards. The menu changes nightly, depending on what is freshest and best from the sea and garden. It may include such dishes as filet of halibut with sun-dried tomato beurre blanc, or loin of lamb with garlic and Irish Mist. Desserts are characterized by an imaginative and expertly judged combination of flavors, such as warm ginger sponge cake with apple compote, honey vanilla ice cream and praline sauce, or marinated fruits with gin and tonic sorbet. If you love it so much you want to spend the night here, you're in luck: Rates start at €150 per night. Ballindoon, Castlebaldwin, Co. Sligo. ☎ 071/916-5155. www.cromleach.com. Entrees €29. AE, MC, V. Dinner daily; closed Nov-Jan.

Markree Castle COLLOONEY

Four stories high, with a forbidding entrance, a monumental stone staircase, and thrusting turrets, Markree is satisfyingly, properly, definitively a castle. It's also family-owned and has been for centuries—the current owner, Charles Cooper, is the 10th generation of his family to live here. Climb up the old stone staircase, and walk

through the wooden doors to a hand-carved oak staircase, ornate plasterwork, and a stained-glass window. Once there, though, it all starts to go wrong. The furniture is modern and not well chosen, and much of it has seen better days. Guest rooms are large but quite worn around the edges. Still, many claim to love this castle, warts and all. Collooney, Co. Sligo (13km/8 miles south of Sligo Town). ☎ 071/916-7800. www.markreecastle.ie. 30 units. Double €150–€260. AE, MC, V. Closed several days at Christmas.

★★★ **Temple House** BALLYMOTE

This grand manor house tucked away amid pastures, forest, and terraced gardens overlooks a lake and the ruins of a Knights Templar castle. The Perceval family has lived here since 1665. Guest rooms are enormous and filled with heirlooms. Beds are firm and comfortable, and all the bathrooms are modern. The walled garden, a short walk from the house, supplies the fruit for breakfast and vegetables for the evening meals served at a communal table. So long as you're not looking for room service and TV, staying here, even for a night, is a friendly and unique experience. There are now also two charming self-catering guesthouses for those who want a bit more privacy. Ballymote, Co. Sligo. ☎ 071/918-3329. www.templehouse.ie. 6 units. Double €160–€180. 4-course dinner €45. AE, MC, V.

Westport

One of County Mayo's loveliest towns, Westport

(Cathair na Mairt) nestles on the shores of Clew Bay. Once a major port, it was designed in the 18th century by James Wyatt with a tree-lined mall, rows of Georgian buildings, and an octagonal central mall where a vibrant market causes a local stir every Thursday. Offshore, Clare Island is the birthplace of Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley.

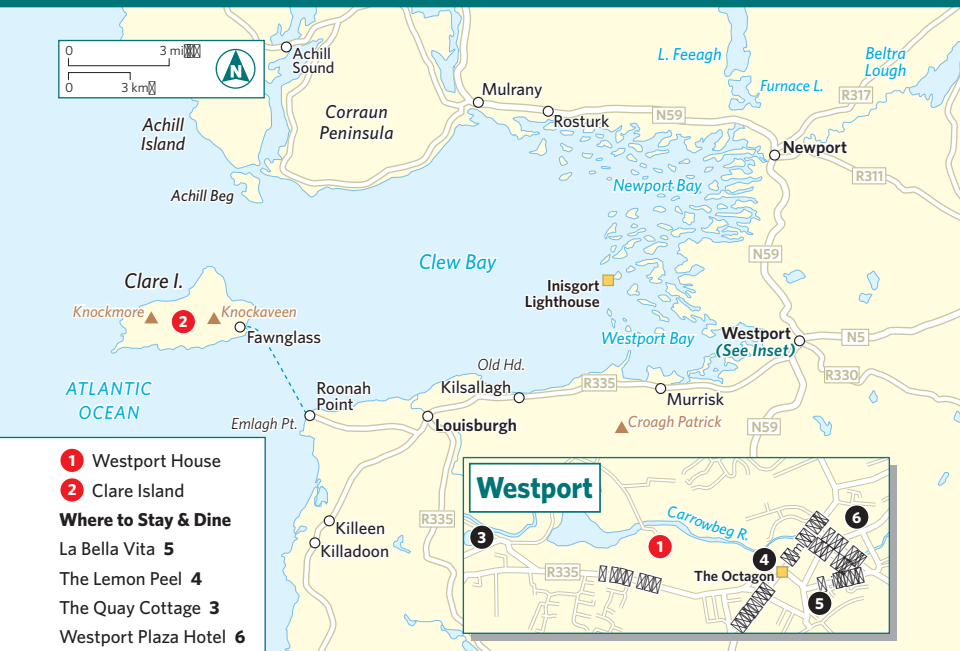


> A stone bridge over the Carrowbeg River connects the tree-lined boulevards of Westport, a designated "heritage town."

START Westport is on the N59, 80km (50 miles) from Galway.

1 ★★ kids Westport House. At the edge of the town of Westport, this late-18th-century residence is the home of Lord Altamont, the marquess of Sligo and a descendant, it is said, of Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley (witness the bronze statue of her on the grounds). The work of Richard Castle and James Wyatt, the house has a graceful staircase of ornate white Sicilian marble, unusual Art Nouveau glass and carvings, family heirlooms, and silver. The grandeur of the residence is undeniable, but purists might be put off by the fact that the sprawling gardens are a commercial enterprise

these days, with a children's zoo, a log ride, swan-shaped pedal boats on the lake, a kid-size train tooting its way through the gardens, an aviary, and more. Probably because of that, prices are quite high. ☎ 2 hr. ☎ 098/25430 or 27766. www.westporthouse.ie. Admission to house and gardens €12 adults, €7.50 seniors, €9 students, €6.50 children; house, gardens, and adventure park €21 adults, €12 seniors, €18 students, €17 children. March weekends only 10am–4pm; early April–late June and Sept daily 10am–4pm; July and Aug daily 10am–5:30pm. Closed Oct–Feb. Adventure park 2 weeks in mid-April, then May–June 10am–4pm; Jul and Aug 10am–5:30pm. Closed Sept–Feb.



> The architecturally stunning Westport House has become something of a theme park in recent years.



2 ★★ Clare Island. Floating about 5km (3 miles) off the Mayo coast, just beyond Clew Bay, Clare Island is a place of unspoiled splendor. Inhabited for 5,000 years and once quite populous—1,700 people lived there in the early 19th century—Clare is now home to 150 year-round islanders, plus perhaps as many sheep. But the island is best known as the haunt of Grace O'Malley, the “Pirate Queen,” who controlled the coastal waters 400 years ago. O'Malley's modest castle and the partially restored Cistercian abbey where she is buried are among the island's few attractions. The rest of the draw is its remote natural beauty. Two ferry services operate out of Roonagh Harbour, 29km (18 miles) south of Westport; charges run about €15 each way for the 15-minute journey: **O'Malley's Ferry Service**, aboard the *Island Princess* (☎ 098/25045); and **Clare Island Ferries**, aboard the *Pirate Queen* (☎ 098/26307). If you want a proper tour of the island, look out for **Ludwig Timmerman's** 1974 Land Rover. Ludwig offers cordial, informative tours from June to August (time and rates vary). Otherwise, your transport options are rented mountain bikes or your own feet. ⌚ 4 hr.

➤ *Rockfleet Castle near Newport was one of several seaside strongholds established by Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley.*

Grace O'Malley: Pirate Queen

Grace O'Malley (Gráinne Ní Mháille)—aka the “Pirate Queen”—was born in 1530 on Clare Island. A heroine, adventurer, pirate, gambler, mercenary, traitor, chieftain, and noblewoman, she is remembered now with affection, though she was feared and despised in her day. Even as a child, she was fiercely independent. When her mother refused to let her sail with her father, she cut off her hair and dressed in boys' clothing. Her father called her “Grainne Mhaol,” or “Bald Grace,” later shortened to Granuaile, her nickname for life.

At 16, Grace married Donal O'Flaherty, second in line to the O'Flaherty clan chieftain, who ruled all of Connacht. A few years later, her career as a pirate began when the city of Galway, one of the largest trade centers in the British Isles, refused to trade with the

O'Flahertys. Grace used her fleet of fast galleys to waylay slower vessels on their way into Galway Harbour. She then offered safe passage for a fee in lieu of pillaging the ships.

She is most fondly remembered for refusing to trade her lands in return for an English title, a common practice of the day.

At the age of 56, she was captured by the English, who planned to hang her. Instead, she was released on the condition that she would stop all piracy. She was stripped of her cattle and most of her lands and forced into poverty. In return, she defied authority and continued to sail. When she met with Queen Elizabeth I, they met as equals, speaking Latin. Court records noted “the wild grandeur of her mien”—as “erect and high before the English queen she dauntless stood.”

Where to Stay & Dine in Westport

★ **La Bella Vita** ITALIAN

Its name means “the beautiful life,” and this relaxed, easygoing Italian wine bar and restaurant delivers good pasta, risotto, and other Italian favorites in a romantic atmosphere, with open fires and candlelight. Start with the antipasti or bruschetta, and leave room for one of the homemade desserts. There’s a great wine list here, too. High St., Westport, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/29771. Entrees €8–€16. MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sun.

★ **The Lemon Peel** MODERN IRISH

If you dine at the Lemon Peel, chef/owner Robbie McMenamin may just arrive tableside to tell you about the specials himself. The dress code is smart casual, and the atmosphere is stylish and buzzy. McMenamin uses only local produce to concoct tasty “modern Irish” fare (code for traditional Irish dishes updated with the chef’s personal touch). Delicious appetizers include a baked goat cheese and red-onion tart and smooth duck-liver pâté, while main courses feature the likes of salmon filet stuffed with crabmeat and roast duck glazed with honey and Grand Marnier. Everything comes with a medley of fresh vegetables on the side, and the cheese sauce on the broccoli is a state secret. The Octagon, Westport, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/26929. www.lemonpeel.ie. Entrees €17–€23 (early-bird menu 5–7pm). AE, MC, V. Dinner Tues–Sun.

★★ **The Quay Cottage** SEAFOOD

This place is known for its freshly caught seafood. In an old stone building overlooking the harbor, Quay Cottage is done up from top to bottom with nautical bric-a-brac. The menu presents fresh, beautifully prepared seafood, such as lemon sole beurre blanc or wild local salmon, with an array of daily specials that often includes steaks. You can take a waterside stroll afterward. The Quay, Westport, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/26412. www.quaycottage.com. Entrees €20–€25. AE, MC, V. Dinner May–Oct daily; Nov–Apr Tues–Sat.



➤ A nautical theme and fresh seafood at the Quay Cottage.

★ **kids Westport Plaza Hotel** MODERN IRISH

Part of the same resort as the neighboring Castlecourt Hotel, this cheerful, modern place is great to know about if you’re traveling with kids. Bedrooms are spacious and well equipped, with firm, king-size beds, Jacuzzi baths in every room, and free Internet and movie rental. The full-service spa and gym features a swimming pool flanked by faux-Greek statuary. The two restaurants—one formal, one bistro—are good, although breakfast options are limited. Babysitting service for kids under 12 and engaging children’s programs are available. Castlebar St., Westport, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/51166. www.westportplazahotel.ie. Double €170–€210. AE, MC, V.

WOMEN OF ACTION

23 Centuries of Indomitable Broads BY CHARLIE O'MALLEY

	CLAIM TO FAME	BACK STORY	STOMPING GROUNDS
 QUEEN MAEVE (MEDB), ca. 200 A.D.	Mythical Iron Warrior Age Queen of Con-naught and all-around pagan party girl whose image adorns the Series B Irish pound note. 	Born in a man's world, she proved she could beat the High Kings of Ireland at their own rough game.	At home in battle or in bed, Maeve wreaked havoc all around Ire-land. Knocknarea, the enormous unexcavated burial cairn in Sligo, is reputedly her eternal resting place.
 MAUD GONNE 1866–1953	Ireland's Joan of Arc. Widely known as the cold-hearted muse of W. B. Yeats, Gonne was a fiery patriot and groundbreaking Victorian-era feminist.	British born with Irish ties, she took up the cause for Irish freedom while the general population was still mostly complacent as colonial subjects.	Gonne traveled throughout Europe and the U.S., campaigning, fundraising, acting, and writing in the name of Irish independence.
 COUNTESS CONSTANCE MARKIEWICZ 1868–1927	Irish rebel and modern Europe's first female politician and cabinet minister.	An Anglo-Irish aristocrat born in London and raised in a County Sligo manor. She was a talented artist and married a Polish count before going radical.	She resided at Lissadell House (aforementioned Sligo manor) when she wasn't digging trenches and sniper shooting on the streets of Dublin.
 NELL McCAFFERTY 1944–	A brash and fearless journalist who, with her razor-sharp wit and reporting, exposes cruelty and hypocrisy within traditional Irish values.	In the 1970s in Ireland divorce was illegal, contraceptives were banned, married women were forced to give up their jobs, and abortion was unthinkable.	After witnessing Bloody Sunday as a civil rights activist, McCafferty started writing for the <i>Irish Times</i>, exposing the cruelty of the Irish children's courts.
 SINÉAD O'CONNOR 1966–	Outspoken Irish rocker who proved women can be bald and beautiful.	A victim of child abuse who grew up with parents who couldn't divorce, she harshly judged Irish family values, inspiring a generation of men and women to protest likewise.	Dublin, London, and L.A. O'Connor personifies the new cosmopolitan Ireland. Her latest music is inspired by a sojourn in Jamaica.

HOW CAN A NATION infamous for female inequality have elected women to serve as two of its eight presidents? More to the point, what do those well-behaved diplomats have in common with the five rabblerothers celebrated here—six if you include Pirate Queen Grace O'Malley (see p 360)? Grace was thieving. Maeve was murderous. Maud spent a lifetime rejecting Yeats. Sinéad ripped up a photo of the pope on TV. Skilled collaborators? Maybe not. But the forces that would keep women down certainly met an equal and opposing force in this lineup. Where would presidents Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese have been without them? That we'll never know.

HOPELESS ROMANTIC?	MOTHERHOOD	FAMOUS ACTS	QUINTESSENTIAL QUOTE
She invaded the Northern Province to rob a stud bull to rival that of her husband, King Aillil. He was killed by Maeve's bodyguard, who was also her lover and later her husband.	Bore seven sons but killed her own sister, whose surviving son murdered Maeve in revenge.	She christened all her seven sons Maine when a druid predicted Maine was the name of the man who would kill her archenemy and rapist, Conchobar, the King of Ulster.	She demanded her multiple husbands and lovers have no "fear, meanness, or jealousy."
Yeats's poems are driven with references to her, revealing an unrequited obsession (Yeats wasn't radical enough) that made her one of the most celebrated women in 20th-century poetry.	Her son, Sean McBride, was leader of the IRA in the 1930s before renouncing violence, co-founding Amnesty International, and winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974.	Imprisoned by both the British and the Irish governments, she went on a hunger strike in 1923 until released by the Free State government.	"The English may batter us to pieces, but they will never succeed in breaking our spirit."
Polish husband soon tired of the independence lark and returned to Poland. She remained married to the cause.	Markiewicz treated her Polish stepson like her own, and they exchanged gifts of pistols. Her relationship with her own daughter, Maeve, was more constrained as Constance's later life became so embroiled in politics.	She held Stephen's Green during the chaos of the 1916 uprising, famously taking out a British sniper on the rooftops.	After learning that she had avoided execution in 1916 because she was female, she said, "I wish you lot had the decency to shoot me."
In 2004 she broke the last taboo by publicly coming out as a lesbian, revealing that she had been the longtime lover of the late Irish novelist Nuala O'Faolain.	More like sisterhood. 	Taking the train to Belfast with a group of women and returning with condoms and contraceptive pills, demanding to be arrested by the customs guards.	Commenting on the smoking ban in Ireland: "At least with the famine, the British gave us a sporting chance—they didn't actually ban the potato."
Her first album, <i>The Lion and the Cobra</i> , was an indie hit laced with anguished romance. Her serial romances last only long enough to produce children.	Four children and counting, the first of which she had when she was 20, despite "record company fat pig men" pressuring her to have an abortion.	Tearing up John Paul II's photo on <i>Saturday Night Live</i> . She was later ordained an independent Catholic priest, unrecognized by the Vatican.	"What pisses me off is when I've got seven or eight record company fat pig men sitting there telling me what to wear."

Achill Island

The rugged, bog-filled, sparsely populated coast of Counties Sligo and Mayo makes for scenic drives to secluded outposts. Leading the list is Achill Island, a heather-filled slip of land with sandy beaches and spectacular views of waves crashing against rocky cliffs. The drive from the mainland and then across the island to the little town of Keel requires patience and skill but rewards you with a camera full of photos. The unrelenting wind off the Atlantic Ocean means that Achill Island is ideal for windsurfing, hang gliding, or any activity that involves a breeze.



➤ *Achill Islanders used to fish for basking shark off glittering horseshoe-shaped Keem Bay.*

START Keem, Achill Island. **TRIP LENGTH** 27km (17 miles).

1 ★ Keem Bay. Once a major fishing ground—basking shark were being caught here commercially up until the 1950s—Keem Bay contains a Blue Flag beach, cloistered by green cliffs and shadowy inlets. You can reach the bay along a small cliff top road, which passes by cliff faces containing, so we're told, rich seams of glittering amethyst. Apparently it's not uncommon to find chunks of the stuff lying loose after heavy rainfall. ☉ Half-day. Keem is on the R319, approx. 5.7km (3½ miles) west of Keel.

From Keel, head north on Slievemore Rd. 3.6km (2¼ miles).

2 ★★ Mount Slievemore & Deserted Village.

The tallest point on Achill Island at 672m (2205 ft.), Mount Slievemore is a handsome enough pile, if an unremarkable one. However, hidden on its slopes is a remarkable find—a deserted village made up of a hundred or so crumbling stone cottages thought to have been built sometime around the 12th century and abandoned during the Great Famine. In fact, the nameless ghost town is known to have been in occasional use until the very early years of the 20th century, as the traditional practice of “booleying” (seasonal occupation by farming communities) continued here long after it had died out in the rest of Ireland. ☉ 1 hr. 30 min. Slievemore is between Keel and Doogort, in the central northeastern part of Achill Island.

Backtrack to Keel and take the R319 southeast to Springvale. At the near end of the village, turn right down the small country road that runs through Bleanaskill, Glenco, and Derreen. Follow signs to Granuaile's Tower. 23km (14 miles).

3 ★ Granuaile's Tower. This impressively positioned 15th-century tower house was once owned by Grace O'Malley, the “Pirate Queen,” who was causing all manner of havoc for the English in these parts in the 16th century. There's not a great deal to see, although it's a stunning spot to admire. Nearby **Kildavnet Church** is thought by some archaeologists to date from the 8th century. ☉ 20 min. Kildavnet is between Derreen Cloghmore, in the southeastern corner of Achill Island.



- 1 Keem Bay
- 2 Mount Slievemore & Deserted Village
- 3 Granuaile's Tower

Where to Stay & Dine

Achill Cliff House 4

The Bervie 5

Where to Stay & Dine on Achill

★ Achill Cliff House **SEAFOOD**

With sweeping views of the bay and the Minaun Cliffs beyond, the restaurant in the Achill Cliff House hotel in Keel is one of the few good options on Achill Island. As it's just a few yards from the sea, the menu leans toward seafood; fresh mussels and seafood chowder are both good options as starters. For main courses, there's grilled *plaice*, Clew Bay oysters, and fresh Atlantic lobster. All entrees come with generous portions of fresh vegetables, as well as the decadent house garlic-cheese potatoes. Service is relaxed and friendly, and the mood is one of infectious holiday pleasure. Main St., Keel, Achill Island, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/43400. www.achillcliff.com. Fixed-price dinner €27, entrees €21–€26. MC, V. Dinner daily.

★★★ The Bervie

Standing strong at the edge of the sea, The Bervie seems to cradle you protectively within its sturdy walls. Once a coast guard station, the white-washed building has been a hotel for two generations. Owner Elizabeth Barrett was born and raised here, where her mother ran a guesthouse for decades. A few years back, Elizabeth and her

husband, John, took over and upgraded the building and made it into what it is today—a snug, relaxing, attractive place to stay. Many rooms have views of the sea (it's just a few feet away), and all are decorated in soothing tones with distinctive, locally made furniture and art. The large, relaxing lounge is filled with tastefully appointed chairs and sofas and is heated by an open fireplace. The sunny breakfast room has dramatic views of the sea and the cliffs across the bay. Breakfasts are out of this world, including homemade cereals, Elizabeth's delectable jams, and a variety of egg options such as light and fluffy scrambled eggs with smoked salmon. Excellent dinners are also available if you book in advance. Signposted from Keel, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/43114. www.bervieachill.com. 14 units. Double €100–€130. Dinner from €40. MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar.

Travel Tip

To reach Achill Island, take the N59 from Westport to Mallaranny, then join the R319. This takes you over a free bridge to the island.

Ballina

Mayo's largest town, Ballina is an attractive, workaday kind of place and makes a good base for exploring the region's unspoiled landscapes and villages. Northwest of town along the coast is the UNESCO World Heritage Site Céide Fields—the superbly preserved and explicated footprint of an advanced Stone Age farming community.



> *The shell of Moyne Abbey's 15th-century Franciscan friary is worth a wander.*

START Ballina is on the N59 and N26, 52km (32 miles) north of Westport.

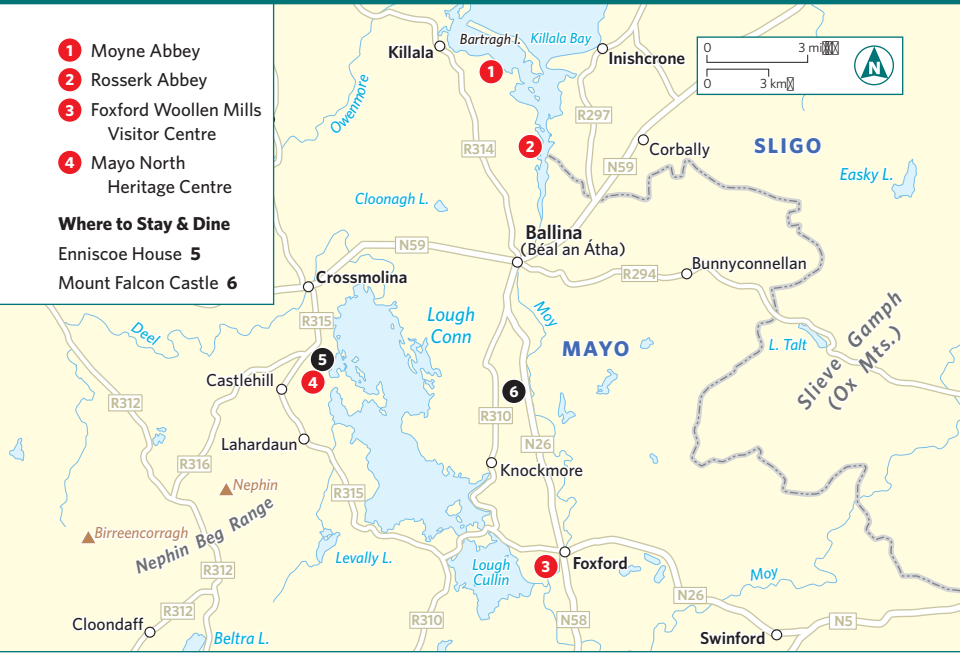
1 ★ Moyne Abbey. Established in the mid-1400s and destroyed by Richard Bingham, the English governor of Connaught, in the 16th century, Moyne Abbey is an atmospheric ruin between Killala and Ballina. There's little left but a shell, although the tower is fairly well preserved. It's a peaceful place, and looking through the abbey's moldering old windows, or over a misty carpet of green fields, you can fully understand why the monks chose this spot. ⌚ 20 min. Free admission. On the R314, between Killala and Ballina.

2 ★★ Rosserk Abbey. Only 3km (1¾ miles) down the road from Moyne, sitting at the edge of the River Rosserk, this abbey is in much better shape. Its chapel windows are well preserved, and you can climb a winding stone stair to look out across the bay. The piscina of the church (once used for washing altar vessels) is still here, carved with angels, and on its lower-left-hand column is a delightful detail: a tiny, elegant carving of a round tower that recalls its 23m-tall (75-ft.) counterpart in nearby Killala. Rosserk Abbey was built at the same time as the Moyne and also destroyed by Bingham's troops. ⌚ 30 min.

- 1 Moyne Abbey
- 2 Rosserk Abbey
- 3 Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre
- 4 Mayo North Heritage Centre

Where to Stay & Dine

- Enniscoe House 5
- Mount Falcon Castle 6



> Like Moyne, Rosserk Abbey was destroyed by English troops in the 16th century, but its ruins are in much better shape than its neighbor's.



➤ *Victorian walled gardens adjoin Enniscoe House and the Mayo North Heritage Centre.*

3 ★ **Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre.**

Founded in 1892 by a local nun to provide work for a community ravaged by the effects of the Irish famine, Foxford Woollen Mills brought prosperity to the area through the worldwide sales of beautiful tweeds, rugs, and blankets. Using a multimedia presentation, the center tells the story of this local industry, then offers an on-site tour of the working mills. Tours run every 20 minutes and last approximately 45 minutes. A restaurant, shop, exhibition center, art gallery, heritage room, and other craft units (including a doll-making workshop) are also part of the visit. ⌚ 1½ hr. St. Joseph's Place, Foxford, Co. Mayo. ☎ 094/925-6104. www.museumsofmayo.com/foxford.htm. Tickets €4 adults; €3 seniors, students, and kids. May–Oct Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Nov–Apr Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 2–6pm. Last tour at 5:30pm. Off the Foxford–Ballina rd. (N57), 16km (10 miles) south of Ballina.

4 ★ **Mayo North Heritage Centre.** If you're tracing your Mayo family tree, you'll want to stop in here. The data bank includes indexes to church registers of all denominations, plus school records, leases, and wills. There's a somewhat incongruous adjacent museum with displays of rural household items, farm machinery, and farm implements. The lovely **Enniscoe Gardens** adjoin the center; combined tickets to the center and gardens are a good deal. There is a handy tearoom on the premises should you need a break. ⌚ 1 hr. Enniscoe, Castlehill, Ballina, Co. Mayo. ☎ 096/31809. www.mayo.irish-roots.net. Tickets to museum €5 adults, €3 kids, €8 families. Combined tickets with gardens €6 adults, €4 kids, €15 families. Oct–May Mon–Fri 9am–4pm; June–Sept Mon–Fri 9am–6pm, Sat–Sun 2–6pm. On Lough Conn, about 3.2km (2 miles) south of Crossmolina, off R315.

Céide Fields Forever

In a breathtaking setting, above huge chalk cliffs that plunge hundreds of feet down into a deep blue sea, ancient people once lived, worked, and buried their dead here—a fact that nobody knew until the 1930s, when a local farmer named Patrick Caulfield noticed stones piled in strange patterns in his fields. More than 40 years later, his son Seamus, by then an archaeologist, explored his father's discovery (he became a scientist in part because he wanted to understand the stones he'd played among as a child). Under the turf, he found Stone Age fields, megalithic tombs, and the foundations of a village. Standing amid it now, you can see a pattern of farm

fields as they were laid out 5,000 years ago (predating the construction of the Egyptian pyramids). Preserved for millennia beneath the bog, the site is both fascinating and inscrutable, as, to a casual observer, it's all little more than piles of stones. The visitor center makes it meaningful in a series of displays, films, and tours. The pyramid-shaped center itself is designed to fit in with the dramatic surroundings—you can see the building for miles. It also contains a cafeteria, which comes as a relief since this site is 20 hilly, rocky kilometers (12 miles) of winding roads from anywhere. For service information see p 345, 3.

Where to Stay & Dine in Ballina



> *Enniscoe House sits on a Georgian country estate.*

★★ **Enniscoe House** MODERN IRISH

This is a terrific place for unwinding and escaping the real world. Overlooking Lough Conn and surrounded by an extensive wooded estate complete with nature walks, this two-story Georgian country inn is owned and run by Susan Kellett, a descendant of a family who settled on the lands in the 1660s. Inside Enniscoe is magnificent, with delicate plasterwork, lovely fireplaces, and a grand staircase. Guest rooms are individually furnished; those at the front of the house are particularly impressive with hand-carved armoires and canopied beds. All rooms have views of parkland or the lake. Meals feature locally caught fish and vegetables and herbs from the adjacent garden. Enniscoe also has its own fishery. Self-catering apartments are available. Next to the North Mayo Heritage Centre, Castlehill, near Crossmolina, Ballina, Co. Mayo. ☎ 096/31112. www.enniscoe.com. 6 units. Double €180–€232; self-catering cottages €450–€800 per week. Dinner from €40. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar. 3.2km (2 miles) south of Crossmolina, off R315.

★★ **Mount Falcon Castle** MODERN IRISH

This sternly beautiful gray-stone manor house has an impressive setting just south of Ballina amid lush forests and lakes. It was built in 1876 by the same man responsible for the exterior of Ashford Castle (which is also a hotel these days—albeit a justifiably pricier one). Mount Falcon Castle was renovated in 2006. The expansion tripled the number of guest rooms and also changed the property from one of near total isolation to a somewhat busier place, by adding three private home developments to the estate. A spa with a heated pool has been added for hotel guests, and the house's kitchen has been turned into a 72-seat restaurant with an attractive bar. The fact that the hotel's prices have more than doubled since the renovation should come as no surprise. Foxford rd. (N57), Ballina, Co. Mayo. ☎ 096/74472. www.mountfalcon.com. 32 units. Double €280–€345. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Feb–Mar.

Counties Sligo & Mayo with Kids

Children might find the ancient tombs puzzling; but they'll love the ponies grazing in fields, and they can splash in the cold ocean water and build sand castles on the beach. They'll be thrilled by the stories of Grace O'Malley the Pirate Queen and may be inclined to set out on the high seas once they learn about her life.



> Kids will feel like fairy tale royalty riding in the swan-shaped paddle boats at Westport House.

START **Westport.** **TRIP LENGTH** 22km (14 miles).

1 ★★ Westport House. Surprisingly enough, the grounds of this grand 18th-century manor—home of the marquess of Sligo Lord Altamont, a descendant of “Pirate Queen,” Grace O'Malley (see earlier in this chapter)—offer various contemporary amusements for children. There's a children's zoo, a log ride, swan-shaped pedal boats on the lake, a kid-size train tooting its way through the gardens, an aviary, and more. ⌚ 3 hr. Westport, County Mayo. ☎ 098/25430 or 27766. www.westporthouse.ie. Admission to house and gardens €12 adults, €7.50 seniors, €9 students, €6.50 children, free children 3 & under; house, gardens and adventure park €21 adults, €16.50 seniors, €18 students, €16.50 children. March weekends only 10am–4pm; early April to late June and Sept daily 10am–4pm; July–Aug daily 10am–5:30pm; closed Oct–Feb. Adventure park open 2 weeks in mid-April then May–June 10am–4pm; Jul–Aug 10am–5:30pm; closed Sept–Feb.

Leave Westport on the R335 coast road west to Louisburgh. 22km (14 miles).

2 ★ Granuaile Centre. This interesting center in an old, converted church is dedicated to the life and story of one of Ireland's great female heroes, Grace O'Malley (Grainne ni Mhaille, 1530–1600). Known as the “Pirate Queen,” she led battles against the English and ruled the high seas. Parts of the center also address the Great Famine that killed an estimated 100,000 people in County Mayo. ⌚ 30 min. Louisburgh, Co. Mayo. ☎ 098/66341. Tickets €4 adults, €2 seniors and students. Students and kids free if accompanied by parents. June to mid-Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm.



RoolaBoola Children's Arts Festival

Now in its 12th year, RoolaBoola is a festival of children's theater, film, and arts workshops at the Linenhall Arts Centre in Castlebar. The festival has been growing in prominence over the last few years and now attracts professional theater companies from all over the world. What particularly appeals about this festival is that although the plays are aimed very firmly at children, they are intelligent, well-produced pieces of theater that don't talk down to their audience. Past program schedules have included a shadow puppet show about a traveling sideshow act and a funny and touching play about the *Kindertransport*. Expect to pay about €6 to €10 per ticket. Family tickets cost €25 and admit four to any show. For more information and details on how to book, call the box office at ☎ 094/902-3733, or visit the festival website, www.thelinenhall.com/roola-boola. The festival program runs for a week in late October, and the program is usually announced in early September.

Counties Sligo & Mayo Outdoors

Serenely beautiful, County Mayo sits in the shadow of its more famous neighbor, Galway, and doesn't seem to mind. This is peaceful, pleasant Ireland, with striking seascapes and inland scenery that ranges from lush and green to stark, desert-like, and mountainous. The terrain changes at every turn and makes for countless scenic drives and secluded walks. Achill Island, for instance, is a heather-filled bog land with sandy beaches and spectacular views of waves crashing against rocky cliffs. Clare Island, once the home of Mayo's legendary "Pirate Queen," Grace O'Malley, is another scenic isle, south of Achill in Clew Bay.



> *The lakeside circuit of Lough Gill Drive passes through "Yeats country."*

START Lough Gill, about 3.2km (2 miles) south of Sligo Town. **TRIP LENGTH** 178km (111 miles), including full Lough Gill Drive.

1 ★ Portacloy. A small, secluded beach, 14km (8½ miles) north of Glenamoy on the

R314, Portacloy is the starting point for a dramatic walk. On a sunny day, its aquamarine waters and fine-grained white sand recall the Mediterranean more than the North Atlantic. At its western edge, there is a concrete quay. From here, head north up the steep



The Achill Walks Festival

If you like hiking to be a social event, then this might well appeal to you. The Achill Walks Festival takes place on Achill Island over 3 days in March. The program of guided walks ranges in difficulty, from easy walks that can be attempted by anyone, to serious hikes up Slievemore Mountain. Walks last 3 to 4 hours, depending on the terrain and weather. It usually costs around €5 to €20 per walk to take part. The atmosphere tends to be extremely convivial, and local pubs have been known to put on a bit of a show for the walkers. It probably helps that the festival usually coincides with St. Patrick's Day. For more information, see www.achilltourism.com.

green slopes of the nearest hill. Don't be too distracted by the fantastic view or adorable little sheep; the boggy slopes on which you are walking end precipitously at an unmarked cliff edge—this walk is not recommended for children. Exercise caution and resist the urge to try to get a better view of the mysterious

sea caves or to reach the outermost extent of the coast's promontories. Instead, use a farmer's fence as a guide and head west toward the striking profile of **Benwee Head**, about 2.4km (1½ miles) away. Return the same way to have a swim in the chilly, tranquil waters of Portacloy. ⌚ 3 hr.

Take the R314 southeast to Ballina, then the N59 and N4 northeast to Sligo Town. In the town, center turn right onto the N16 (Duck St.) and continue out of town on the R286. Follow signs to Lough Gill from this road. 134km (83.3 miles).



**SITE
GUIDE**
PAGE 374

2 ★★ The Lough Gill Drive. This 42km (26-mile) drive-yourself tour around Lough Gill is well signposted. Head 1.6km (1 mile) south of town and follow the signs for William Butler Yeats's favorite lake, **Lough Gill**. Within 3.2km (2 miles) you'll be on the lower edge of the shoreline. You can drive the whole lakeside circuit in less than an hour, but this beautiful and rejuvenating route deserves a whole day to be appreciated properly. ⌚ 1 day.



SITE GUIDE

2 The Lough Gill Drive

As you head clockwise around the lake, you can't miss **A Parke's Castle** (see p 356), a 17th-century manor surrounded by forest along the north shore. The visitor's center brings to life the castle's history—primarily as the fortress of the O'Rourke clan of Breffni. Halfway around the lake from Sligo Town is the **B Lake Isle of Innisfree**. Made famous in Yeats's poetry and in song, it's one of 22 islands in Lough Gill.

★ **C Dromahair**, a delightful village on the River Bonet in County Leitrim, is off the lake route but well worth a detour. Back on the lakeshore, **D Dooney Rock** has its own nature trail and lakeside walk (inspiration for the poem "Fiddler of Dooney"). Heading north, the **E Hazelwood Sculpture Trail** is a unique forest walk along the shores of Lough Gill with 13 wood sculptures.

The road along Lough Gill's upper shore brings you back to the northern end of Sligo Town. Continue north on the main road (N15), and you'll see the graceful profile of **F Ben Bulbin** (519m/1,703 ft.), one of the Dartry Mountains, rising off to your right.



*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and
wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for
the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE BY W. B. YEATS

Sligo & Mayo Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR **Aer Arann** (☎ 01/814-5240; www.aerarann.ie) runs two daily flights from Dublin into the airports in Strandhill, County Sligo (☎ 071/916-8280; www.sligoairport.com; 40 min.), and Ireland West Airport Knock in Charlestown, County Mayo (☎ 1850/67-2222; www.knockairport.com). The region is also served by **bmi baby** (☎ 1890/340-122; www.bmibaby.com) from Manchester and Birmingham in England. **BY TRAIN** **Irish Rail**, with its station on Lord Edward Street (☎ 071/916-9888; www.irishrail.ie), runs daily service into Sligo from Dublin. It also provides daily service to Ballina, Westport, and Castlebar. **BY BUS** **Bus Éireann**, also pulling into Lord Edward Street (☎ 071/916-0066; www.buseireann.ie), runs daily bus service to Sligo from Dublin, Galway, and other points, including Derry in Northern Ireland. It provides daily service to major towns in Mayo. **BY CAR** Four major roads lead to Sligo: N4 from Dublin and the east, N17 from Galway and the south, N15 from Donegal to the north, and N16 from Northern Ireland.

ATMs/Cashpoints

SLIGO On Stephen Street, there's an Ulster Bank and an Allied Irish Bank (AIB). **WESTPORT** Westport has a Bank of Ireland. In the country, cash machines are rare but occasionally found in small groceries.

Currency Exchange

There's a currency exchange desk at Knock airport. You can also try the Ulster Bank in Sligo.

Doctors

SLIGO In emergencies dial ☎ 999. **Medi Centre**, Bridge Street, Sligo Town (☎ 071/914-2550). **BALLINA** The **Moyview Family Practise**, Dillon Terrace, Ballina (☎ 096/22933).

Dentists

WESTPORT **Richard Leekin**, Upper James Street, Westport (☎ 098/26611). **BALLINA** The **Ballina Killaloe Dental Practise**, Grange Road, Ballina (☎ 061/375493).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ 999 for police, ambulance, or fire emergencies.

Internet Access

You can get online at **Sligo Central Library**, Stephen Street (☎ 071/911-1675). In Ballina, try **Chat'rnet**, Bridge Street (☎ 096/76510).

Pharmacies

SLIGO **Boots the Chemist**, 31 O'Connell Street, Sligo Town (☎ 071/914-9445). **BALLINA** **Quinn's Chemist**, Pearse Street, Ballina (☎ 096/21365). **WESTPORT** **Heaney's Pharmacy**, Upper Bridge Street, Westport (☎ 098/28200).

Police

The **Sligo Garda Station** is on Pearse Road (☎ 071/915-7000).

Post Offices

SLIGO Wine Street (☎ 071/915-9273). **BALLINA** King Street (☎ 096-21498). **WESTPORT** Main Street (☎ 098/45141).

Taxis

SLIGO **Ace Cabs** (☎ 071/914444) or **City Cabs** (☎ 071/914-5577). **BALLINA** **Ballina Taxi Company** (☎ 087/295-8787).

Telephones

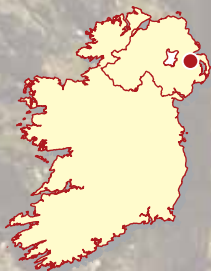
The area codes for Mayo are 094, 096, and 098. The code for Sligo is 071.

Toilets

Public toilets are very rare in this heavily rural area. Try the tourist offices in Sligo or Ballina. All museums and major sights have toilets, and some pubs do not mind if you use their toilets as long as you ask first.

Visitor Information

North West Tourism and Cultural Centre, Aras Reddan, Temple Street, Sligo Town (☎ 071/916-1201; www.discoverireland.ie/northwest); open year-round, weekdays 9am to 5pm, with weekend and extended hours April to August. Local tourist offices, open from May or June to September or October, are the **Ballina Tourist Office**, Cathedral Road, Ballina, County Mayo (☎ 096/70848); **Castlebar Tourist Office**, Linenhall Street, Castlebar, County Mayo (☎ 094/902-1207); **Achill Tourist Office**, Achill Sound (☎ 098/45384); and **Westport Tourist Office** (☎ 098/25711).



12

Belfast





Favorite Moments in Belfast

Scarred by generations of civil war and terrorism, Belfast is a fascinating place to visit because the conflict that defined it is so recent and yet so often misunderstood by outsiders. A little more than a decade into the delicate reign of peace in the region, now is an extraordinary time to visit Belfast as it undergoes a sort of renaissance and redefines its role as the capital of the six Ireland counties still governed by the United Kingdom.



> *PREVIOUS PAGE* University Square at Belfast's Queen's University. *THIS PAGE* The 61m (200-ft.) ferris wheel outside City Hall.

Wandering City Hall. This classical building stands as a testament to Belfast's 19th-century affluence. The lobby alone is something to behold—over-the-top and in itself worth the trip. See p 382.

Walking along the River Lagan to the Lagan Weir. Once polluted, now thoroughly cleaned up, this waterfront was the heart and soul of Belfast in its heyday. Today it has a great visitor center. See p 384.

Spending the night at the Merchant Hotel. Belfast's newest luxury hotel, the Merchant swathes you in luxury, hands you a cocktail,

and then cradles you to sleep. It's a grand new addition. See p 404.

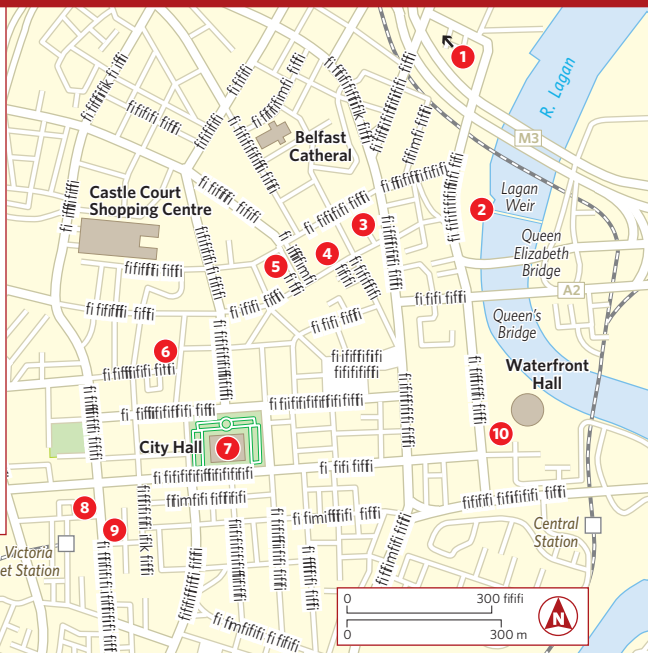
Having a pint at the Crown Liquor Saloon.

This pub is like a living, breathing artwork. Its gaslights, pewlike seating, tiled walls, and historic detail make it a rich spot in which to linger for hours. See p 408.

Shopping for souvenirs at the Wicker Man.

This shop stocked with Irish arts and crafts is a great place to browse for unusual souvenirs. You can find hand-thrown pottery, hand-carved wooden kitchenware, paintings, sculpture—whatever your heart desires. See p 396.

- Wandering City Hall **7**
- Walking along the River Lagan to the Lagan Weir **2**
- Spending the night at the Merchant Hotel **3**
- Having a pint at the Crown Liquor Saloon **9**
- Shopping for souvenirs at the Wicker Man **4**
- Shopping at St. George's Market **10**
- Splurging on dinner at Café Paul Rankin **6**
- Lunch at White's Tavern **5**
- Wandering Carrickfergus Castle **1**
- Seeing what's on at the Grand Opera House **8**



Shopping at St. George's Market. We love wandering this traditional market, packed with everything from fresh vegetables and cheeses to clothes and books. See p 397.

Splurging on dinner at Café Paul Rankin.

Paul Rankin is Northern Ireland's most famous celebrity chef. His modern approach to traditional Irish cooking and his use of local produce are expert. See p 399.

Lunch at White's Tavern. This historic pub is a favorite lunch spot for locals, so we recommend going just before or after peak lunch hour for a steaming plate of the day's specials in a 17th-century building. See p 401.

Wandering Carrickfergus Castle. A huge, sprawling place, this vast castle perched at the edge of the sea is fun to explore, especially if you've got kids. We like walking the village around it, too. See p 410.

Seeing what's on at the Grand Opera House.

A glorious, Oriental-style Victorian theater, this place provides an extraordinary setting for whatever's on, whether it's a play, a musical, or a rock band. See p 383.



> There are plenty of kid-friendly attractions at Carrickfergus Castle, including a supersize chess board.

Belfast in 1 Day

Belfast boomed in the 19th century as prosperity flowed from its vast textile and shipbuilding industries. The 20th century was not so kind to the city, which spent many years in decline, but plenty of grand old Victorian buildings still reflect that time of wealth and power. On this tour you'll see some of the city's more handsome enclaves, including the province's preeminent university, Queens, and City Hall, built at the height of Belfast's industrial power.

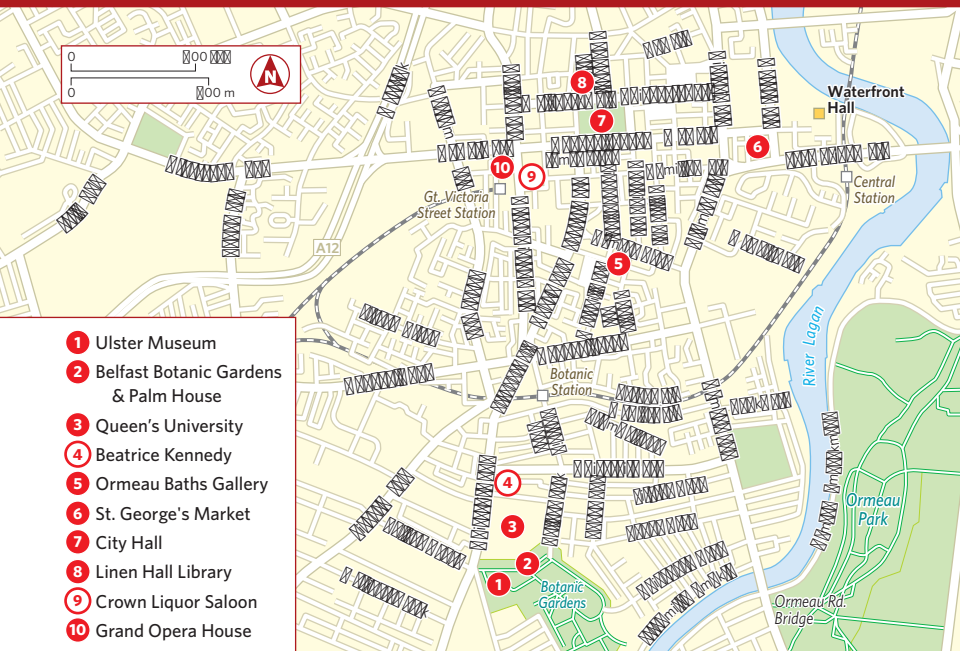
START **Stranmillis Road.**

1 ★★ Ulster Museum. Built in the grand Classical Renaissance style with an Italian marble interior, this excellent museum explores 9,000 years of Irish history through exhibits on art, furniture, ceramics, costume, industrial heritage, and a permanent display of products "Made in Belfast." One of the best-known exhibits is the collection of gold and silver jewelry, recovered by divers in 1968 off the Antrim coast from the 1588 wreckage of the Armada treasure ship, *Girona*. Check out the "Early Ireland" gallery, which has an extensive, cleverly displayed collection of prehistoric stone and bronze artifacts from the region's many ancient archaeological sites.

There's also an exceptional collection of historic fine arts, including Belleek pottery, a vast assemblage of Irish silver, and formal costumes. As this book was going to press, the museum was under renovation. It's likely to be closed from time to time throughout 2010, and the opening hours, days, and prices are likely to change. Please call ahead for specific information. ☉ 1½ hr. Signposted from M1/M2 (Balmoral exit); next to the Botanic Gardens, Stranmillis Rd. ☎ 028/9038-3000. www.ulstermuseum.org.uk. Free except for major special exhibitions. Mon–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat 1–5pm; Sun 2–5pm. Bus: 61, 71, 84, or 85.

➤ *The first class at Queen's numbered 90; today more than 24,000 students matriculate.*





2 ★ Belfast Botanic Gardens & Palm House

House. Dating from 1828, these gardens were established by the Belfast Botanic and Horticultural Society. Ten years later, they gained a glass conservatory, designed by noted Belfast architect Charles Lanyon. Now known as the Palm House, this unique building is an early example of curvilinear cast-iron glass-house construction. It contains a good variety of tropical plants, including sugar cane, coffee, cinnamon, and ivory nut. If the weather's fine, stroll in the outdoor rose gardens, first established in 1927. ☉ 1 hr. Signposted from M1/M2 (Balmoral exit), Stranmillis Rd. ☎ 028/9032-4902. Free admission. Palm House and Tropical Ravine year-round Mon–Fri 10am–noon; Apr–Sept daily 1–5pm; Oct–Mar daily 1–4pm. Gardens daily 8am–sunset. Bus: 61, 71, 84, or 85.

3 ★★ Queen's University. This is Northern Ireland's most prestigious university, founded by Queen Victoria in 1845 to provide nondenominational higher education. The main, 19th-century Tudor revival building may remind you of England's Oxford, as its design was based on that of the Founder's Tower at Magdalen College. The whole neighborhood around the university is a quiet, attractive place



> The Botanic Gardens encompass a rose garden, an alpine garden, and a bowling green.

to wander, and University Square on the north side of campus is simply beautiful. At one end of the square is the Union Theological College, which dates to 1853 and housed the Northern Ireland Parliament after the partition of Ireland



> The entrance to St. George's Market, which hosts a range of festivals and events throughout the year.

in 1921. ☎ 1 hr. Visitor Centre, University Rd.
☎ 028/9033-5252. www.qub.ac.uk/vcentre. Free admission. Year-round Mon–Fri 10am–4pm; May–Sept Sat 10am–4pm also. Bus: 61, 71, 84, or 85.

④ 🍴 ★ **Beatrice Kennedy.** This attractive, popular restaurant in the University Quarter serves reasonably priced traditional Irish fare, with an especially fine line of tasty stews. Try the delicious home-baked bread. 44 University Rd.
☎ 028/9020-2290. \$. See p 399.

⑤ ★★ **Ormeau Baths Gallery.** Occupying the site of, and partly incorporating, the old Victorian swimming baths designed by Robert Watt, Ormeau Baths Gallery opened in 1995 as the city's principal exhibition space for contemporary visual art. This striking and versatile facility can

simultaneously program multiple exhibitions in a variety of media and has become the premier showcase for the best of Northern Irish contemporary art. Public talks, events, and workshops take place on a regular basis; most of these are free or have a nominal charge of a couple pounds.
☎ 1 hr. 18A Ormeau Ave., Belfast, Co. Antrim.
☎ 028/9032-1402. www.ormeaubaths.co.uk. Free admission. Tues–Sat 10am–6pm. Bus: 7A, 7B, 7C, 7D.

⑥ ★ **St. George's Market.** If you visit on a Friday or Saturday, drop in at Belfast's original "Variety Market," dating from the 19th century and now standing across from the new Waterfront Hall. Completely restored in 1999, it is a colorful outlet for fresh fruit, flowers, fish, vegetables, clothing, crafts, and lots more. ☎ 1 hr. See p 397.
May St. at Oxford St. ☎ 028/9043-5704. Fri from 6am; Sat from 9am.

⑦ ★ **City Hall.** This glorious explosion of granite, marble, and stained glass is testament to Belfast's grand industrial past. Built in classical Renaissance style in 1906, it has white Portland stone walls and a soft green copper dome. There are several statues on the grounds—a grim-faced

Tip

Because Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, the currency is the British pound (not the euro), and distances on road signs appear in miles (not kilometers).



> *Belfast's historic Grand Opera House has a satellite restaurant, cafe, and smaller performance space.*

statue of Queen Victoria stands out front, looking as if she wished she were anyplace else. Bronze figures around her represent the textile and shipbuilding industries that powered Belfast's success. There's also a memorial to the victims of the *Titanic* disaster. Inside the building, the elaborate entry hall is heavy with marble but lightened by stained glass and a rotunda with a painted ceiling. Somehow it all manages not to be tacky. There are often exhibitions upstairs. To learn more about the building's history, take a free guided tour—ask in the lobby. ⌚ 45 min. Donegall Sq. ☎ 028/9027-0456. Free admission. Guided tours June–Sept Mon–Fri 11am, 2pm, and 3pm, Sat 2:30pm; Oct–May Mon–Sat 11am and 2:30pm. Otherwise by arrangement. Reservations required.

8 Linen Hall Library. Started by a group called the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge in 1788, this library took its name from the lovely, Victorian former linen hall it occupied in 1802. Today it holds specialist collections devoted to genealogy, the arts, and Ulster politics. The attractive building was nearly torn down during the 1970s, but it has since been restored and expanded. ⌚ 30 min. 17 Donegall

Sq. N. ☎ 028/9032-1707. www.linenhall.com. Free admission; donations requested. Mon–Fri 9:30am–5:30pm; Sat 9:30am–1pm.

9 ☎ ★★ Crown Liquor Saloon. Since 1826, crowds have been gathering here to drink amid stained-glass windows, a pounded-tin ceiling, elaborate tile floors, and etched and smoked glass dividing the wooden cubicle seating. The gorgeous mosaic exterior is a mere hint of what's inside. See p 408. 46 Great Victoria St., Belfast. ☎ 028/9027-9901. \$

10 ★ Grand Opera House. On the Golden Mile near the Europa Hotel, the Grand Opera House first opened its doors in 1895. Its elaborately detailed, soaring auditorium is a resplendent reminder of how the town looked in its heyday. Variety shows were the mainstay in the 1920s, then opera in the 1940s. It was nearly demolished in the 1970s, but it was saved and restored. Since 2006, it has been a central part of Belfast's cultural scene, hosting opera again, musicals, and plays. Great Victoria St. ☎ 028/9024-1919. www.goh.co.uk.

Belfast in 2 Days

Start your second day in Belfast with a walk along the River Lagan—once the center of the city's shipbuilding industry and social life. This area is recovering from a long period of deprivation, but the Lagan Weir and the Odyssey Complex—with its restaurants and interactive exhibits—are doing a lot to improve it. After stopping at Belfast Cathedral and a couple of nearby sites, take a tour of the famous murals on the Shankill and Falls roads. These neighborhoods were the epicenter of the Troubles that blighted Belfast and Northern Ireland for nearly 3 decades. We are always moved by the stories we encounter in the small cultural centers on those streets and by the tales that the murals tell. Black Taxi tours will help you understand the context in which they were painted.



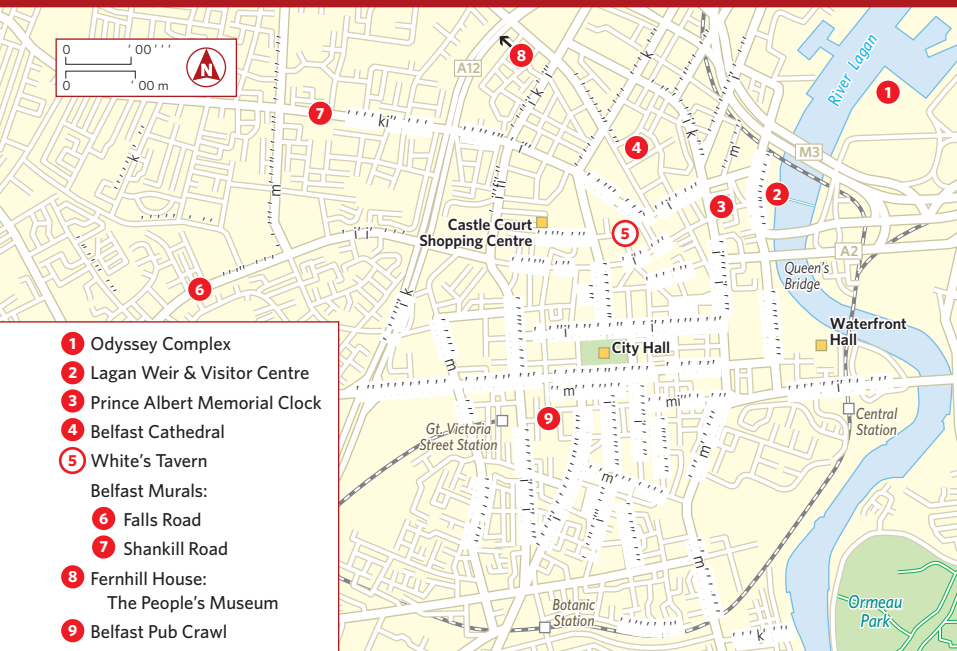
> A century's worth of construction has yielded a *mélange* of architectural styles in Belfast Cathedral.

START Donegall Quay.

1 ★★ **kids Odyssey Complex.** Popular since it opened in 2001, this enormous entertainment, education, and sports center on the east bank of the river is bursting with activities. The hands-on science center, W5, is a hypermodern, interactive learning environment where children can compose their own music on an air harp, create tornadoes, learn how robots are built, and try to make one of their own. Also in the complex are an arena where the Belfast Giants ice hockey team plays, an IMAX cinema, video game arcades, and lots of bars, restaurants, and cafes. On a rainy day, there's

probably no better place to go to keep everyone amused and dry. ⌚ 1 hr. The Odyssey Complex is a 5-min. walk across the weir from the Lagan Lookout. ☎ 028/9046-7700. Tickets to W5 £6 (\$12) adults, £4 (\$8) kids 4-18, kids under 4 free, £17 (\$34) families. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm; Sun noon-6pm. Bus: 26.

2 ★ **Lagan Weir & Visitor Centre.** By the 1980s, decades of pollution had left the River Lagan, once the center of Belfast life, a filthy mess. In the 1990s, a cleanup program and construction of the Lagan Weir (a low dam designed to raise the water level) gradually brought the river back to life. Today it is a



healthy ecosystem, home to eels, salmon, and sea trout. The progress is commemorated in the ceramic statue *Bigfish*, a giant salmon covered in tiles that tell the history of the city and its river. The Lagan Lookout Visitor Centre offers an entertaining look at how the weir works. The hands-on center has computers and interactive activities to tell the tale. ⌚ 30 min. 1 Donegall Quay. ☎ 028/9031-5444. Tickets £2 (\$4). Apr–Sept Mon–Fri 11am–5pm, Sat noon–5pm, Sun 2–5pm; Oct–Mar Tues–Fri 11am–3:30pm, Sat 1–4:30pm, Sun 2–4:30pm.

3 ★ Prince Albert Memorial Clock. Built between 1865 and 1870 as a memorial to Queen Victoria's late husband, this handsome clock stands 34m (113 ft.) tall and contains a bell weighing in excess of 2 tons. There's a statue of the titular prince nearby. Because the clock was built on marshy land near the waterfront, it has sunk over time and now lists noticeably. Locals call it the "leaning tower." Queen's Sq.

4 ★ Belfast Cathedral. The foundation stone on this monumental cathedral was laid in 1899, but it remained incomplete for more than a century; even now it still awaits a steeple. Criss-crossing architectural genres from Romanesque

to Victorian to modern, the huge structure is more attractive inside than out. In the nave, the ceiling soars above the black-and-white marble walls and stone floors, and elaborate stained-glass windows fill it with color. Carvings that represent life in Belfast top the 10 pillars in the nave. The cathedral's most impressive features, though, are the delicate mosaic ceilings of the tympanum and the baptistery, made of thousands of pieces of glass and designed by sisters Gertrude and Mary Martin over the course of 7 years. ⌚ 30 min. Donegall St. ☎ 028/9033-2328. www.belfastcathedral.org. Free admission (donations accepted). Mon–Fri 10am–4pm. Bus: ERP, NPR.

5 ☕ ★★ White's Tavern. One of Belfast's most venerated drinking spots, White's is a creaky, historic old pub, hidden down a cobblestone lane in the city center. It's also a very popular lunch spot and a great place just to sit and listen to the conversations around you. In the unlikely event you get bored, there's enough memorabilia packed in here to almost make it qualify as a minimuseum, too. 2–4 Winecellar Entry (between High and Rosemary sts.). ☎ 028/9033-0988. \$. See p 401.



> Colorful murals tell of their neighborhoods' political convictions and turbulent histories.

6 & 7 ★★ Belfast Murals. The huge street murals in West Belfast are painted by amateur artists—some of them immensely talented. Each mural tells a tale of history, strife, anger, or peace. The densest concentration is around the **Falls and Shankill roads**. During the Troubles, from the late 1960s to the mid-1990s, this area was the center of the conflict. The Falls Road is staunchly Catholic and Republican; Shankill, just half a mile away, is resolutely Protestant and Loyalist. Both of these streets are safe now for discreet visitors to wander; indeed, locals are proud of their murals and are used to people coming along to see them and take photos. The themes are wide-ranging—there are now murals on the Falls Road protesting the Iraq war and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. ⌚ 1 hr. for Falls and Shankill roads. To reach the Falls Rd. from Donegall Sq., travel north along Donegall Place and turn left on Castle St., then head straight ahead on Divis St. across the busy Westlink to the Falls Rd. Bus: 10C, 10D, 10G. The Shankill Rd. runs parallel to the Falls Rd. For an illustrated tour of the murals, see p 388.

8 ★ Fernhill House: The People's Museum. This decidedly biased educational museum on Glencairn Road, beyond the end of Shankill Road, is a re-creation of a Protestant Belfast house as it would have looked in the 1930s. Exhibitions trace the history of the area through Home Rule, war, and the continuing tensions. For the paranormally inclined, Fernhill House operates a Ghost Watch program, and staff members share tales of their spooky experiences in the house. ⌚ 45 min. Glencairn Rd., Belfast, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9071-5599. www.fernhillhouse.co.uk. Tickets £2 (\$4) adults, £1 (\$2) kids. Mon–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun 1–4pm. Bus: 63.



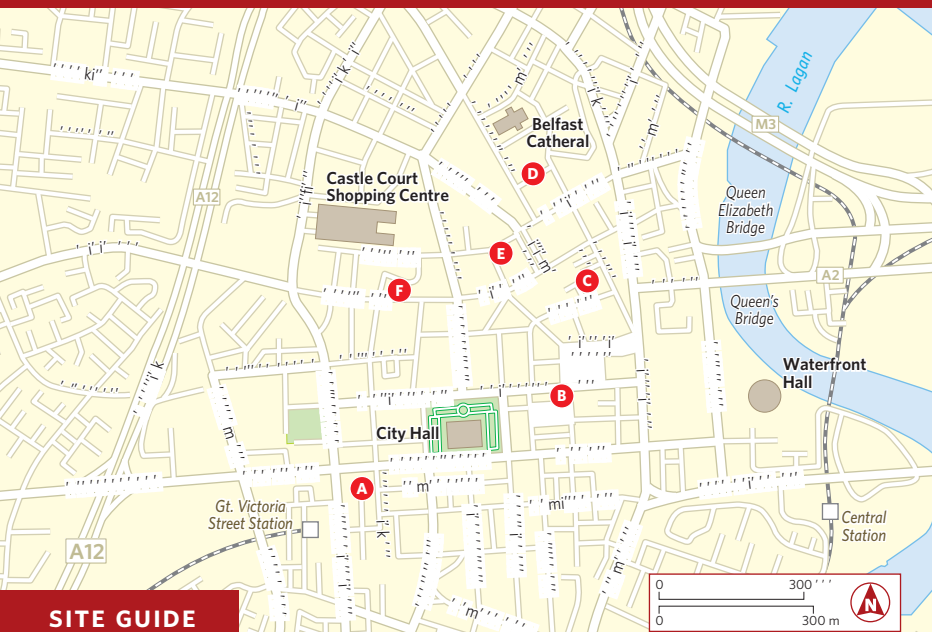
Black Taxi Tour of the Troubles

For many years, Belfast was best known for its most conflicted neighborhoods, where in the 1970s protests occurred daily, and in the 1980s violence was the norm. Now that peace has precariously descended upon the Catholic Falls Road and its nearby parallel, the Protestant Shankill Road, there's a growing industry around exploring the city's most infamous sectarian neighborhoods. The best tours are conducted by the various "black cabs," which take groups of one to five people in London-style cabs through the neighborhoods, past the barbed wire, towering fences, and partisan murals, as guides explain their significance. There are a number of these tour groups and quality varies considerably, but we highly recommend the 2-hour **Black Taxi Tour** (☎ 0800/052-3914; www.belfaststours.com). Drivers are relaxed, patient, and unbiased (our driver let us guess at the end of the tour whether he was Catholic or Protestant—and we guessed wrong). The fare is £25 (\$50) for the first two passengers, or £8 (\$16) per person for three or more passengers.



**SITE
GUIDE**
PAGE 387

9 Belfast Pub-Crawl. Belfast has some exceptional, storied old places in which to raise a pint. This pub walk can take you a couple of hours or all the way to 11pm, when pubs traditionally close (although these days more and more places stay open later). For more pubs and other nightlife venues see p 407.



SITE GUIDE

9 Belfast Pub-Crawl

A Owned by the U.K.-based National Trust, the glorious ★★★ **Crown Liquor Saloon** (46 Great Victoria St.; ☎ 028/9027-9901) has stained-glass windows, a stamped-tin ceiling, elaborate tile floors, etched glass, and a mosaic exterior.

B ★ **The Garrick** (29 Chichester St.; ☎ 028/9032-1984), a gas-lit alehouse with soaring ceilings and elaborate tile work, stands out among the big office buildings that surround it. A longtime hangout for the city's legal community, it's often packed with lawyers and judges. Dating from at least 1810, the **C** ★★ **Morning Star** (17-19 Pottingers Entry; ☎ 028/9024-7447) is a gorgeous old pub, hidden away in an old arcade. Some say its horseshoe shape is an homage to its former life as the terminus of the Dublin-to-Belfast stagecoach. The deep and narrow **D** ★ **Duke of York** (7-11 Commercial Court; ☎ 028/9024-1062) has long been a watering hole for Belfast's journalists and printers, and it's filled with the detritus of their profession. You can join the lively throng of locals or sneak away into a snug. **E** ★★ **White's Tavern** (2-4 Winecellar Entry, between High and



Rosemary sts.; ☎ 028/9033-0988) has been around in one form or another since 1630. And it looks it—lined with cozy snugs and covered in antique pub-related bric-a-brac. They pull a good pint and serve superb lunches too.

F ★ **The Hercules Bar** (61-63 Castle St.; ☎ 028/9032-4587) dates back to 1875. It's a lively, traditional pub, very popular with local residents, and a great place to go to pick up local gossip. It's packed to the rafters on Saturday nights, when Irish bands play live.

DRAWING SIDES

Belfast's Falls & Shankill Roads

BY CHARLIE O'MALLEY

EVEN SINCE THE 1999 Belfast Agreement effected peace between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Falls Road remains 99% Catholic, and the Shankill Road is 99% Protestant. (Although the Troubles were a lethally blended Molotov of religion and politics, the partisan residents of Northern Ireland still primarily define themselves in terms of religion—whether or not they actively practice either faith.) The paintings that adorn the gables of homes along these roads are vivid expressions of political and ethnic identity, chronicles of the city's troubled past, and memorials to those who died.

① **BELFAST MONA LISA** Known as the Belfast Mona Lisa, this Ulster Freedom Fighter (UFF) seems to point his gun at you wherever you wander on Hopewell Crescent, near the Protestant Shankill Road. Associated with drug trafficking and numerous murders of Catholic civilians, the UFF and even its legal political wing, the UDP (Ulster Democratic Party), dissolved in the wake of the Belfast Agreement.

② **THE PEACE LINE** This 20-foot wall marks the spot where Catholic and Protestant communities clashed and literally fought for the streets. Mob evictions and street burning in 1969 triggered its "temporary construction," but it still stands today.

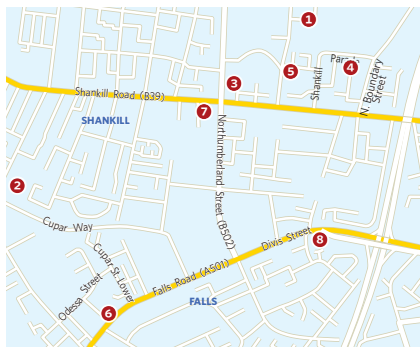
③ **BLACK & WHITE** Loyalist Union Jacks will never sit well with Irish Tricolors, nor the British crown with Celtic harps. Both factions, however, were fond of using certain similar images: the Red Hand of Ulster, black-gloved paramilitaries, and POW appeals. They also shared an enthusiasm for a bewildering list of acronyms: UDA, IRA, UFF, UVF, INLA, etc.

④ **DRUMCREE CHURCH MURAL** Drumcree Church is a small country church near the border in Portadown and the site of an annual sectarian standoff between Catholics and Protestants, with the police in between. To this day, the loyalist Orange Order insists on marching through a nationalist area to reach the church during the province's parade season every July.





⑤ **CROMWELL** Memories are long in Northern Ireland, and this mural on the Shankill Road celebrates



④ **BOBBY SANDS** This giant portrait of Bobby Sands adorns the Sinn Féin office on the Falls Road. In 1981, Sands was elected to British Parliament while on a hunger strike in prison. His success at the ballot box helped persuade the IRA and Sinn Féin to take the democratic route, though Sands was the first of 10 republican prisoners who died during their grim protest.

that greatest defender of Protestantism, Oliver Cromwell, and his brutal invasion of Ireland in 1650. "To hell or to Connacht" was his battle cry as his New Model Army descended upon the Catholic population, killing or exiling 20% of the populace and sowing the seeds for a civil conflict that continues to this day.

⑦ **SHANKILL BOMB MURAL** In 1993, a botched IRA attack on loyalist paramilitaries resulted in the deaths of nine innocent civilians in a fish shop on the Shankill Road. The atrocity unleashed a wave of reprisals and further pressured the republican leadership into eventually abandoning violence.

⑧ **THE DIVIS TOWER** During the Troubles, the Divis Tower was a 20-story vertical slum topped by a barricaded British army fort. The IRA ruled the streets below while the army came and went by helicopter. A flash point from the beginning, the area was the scene of the first child casualty in 1969.



⑨ **PAINTING OVER THE CRACKS** Since the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, Northern Ireland's politicians have moved slowly toward power sharing. Yet the peace process often seems to be a thin veneer, like the paint that now covers the more violent murals. Ulster's move away from violence is far from complete, as suggested by dissident republican shootings of soldiers and police, followed by loyalist retaliation, in 2009.

Belfast Outdoors

Beyond the industrial hub of Belfast, Northern Ireland is predominantly green and rural. As soon as you step to the edges of the capital, you can see that wilderness begin. Even the Belfast Zoo feels untamed, ranging over Cave Hill, the mountain where it sits overlooking the city. It's a great area for long outdoor walks, with grand houses to explore and rare animals including Barbary lions, a red panda, and Western Lowland Gorillas, nearly extinct in the wild.



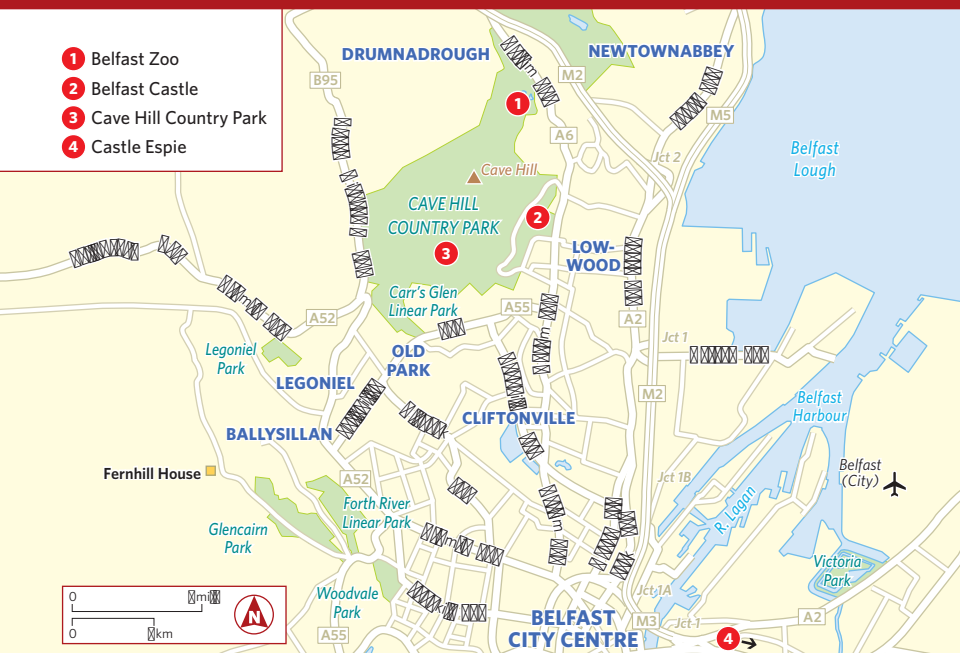
➤ *More than 120 meters (394 ft.) above sea level, Belfast Castle affords spectacular views.*

START Antrim road (A6), 5 miles (8 km) from Belfast.

1 ★★ Kids Belfast Zoo. In a picturesque mountain park on the slopes of Cave Hill overlooking the city, this sprawling zoo is a modern, progressive kind of place. Things weren't always this rosy, however, and Belfast Zoo has a rather sad past. Opened in 1920, it started to go bankrupt by the 1930s. At its worst moment, all of its lions and tigers were shot during World War II to ensure they could not escape during an air raid. After that, it entered a period of grim decline for decades, until it was rescued from dereliction in the late '70s. These days the focus is very much on conservation and education, with active programs for breeding rare species including Hawaiian geese, Indian lions, and golden lion tamarins. There are also a single red panda and six ex-

tremely rare Barbary lion cubs (one of which was hand-raised by a keeper after being rejected by its mother). The brand-new Rainforest House is a tropical environment filled with birds and jungle creatures. ⌚ 2 hr. 5 miles (8 km) north of the city on A6, Antrim rd. ☎ 028/9077-6277. www.belfast-zoo.co.uk. There are two price tiers—lower prices apply Oct–Mar. Tickets £6.70–£8.10 (\$13–\$16) adults, £3.40–£4.30 (\$6.80–\$8.60) kids 4–18, free for seniors and kids 3 & under. Apr–Sept daily 10am–7pm; Oct–Mar daily 10am–4pm. Bus: 1A–G, 9, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, or 51.

2 ★★★ Belfast Castle. Northwest of downtown and 120m (394 ft.) above sea level, Belfast Castle dates from 1870. It was the family residence of the third marquess of Donegall, but after a relatively brief life in private ownership, it was granted to the city in 1934. Afterward it



was used for private functions for more than 50 years before it opened to the public in 1988. It's a lovely place to visit, with sweeping views of Belfast and the lough. Its cellars contain a nifty Victorian arcade, with a bar, a bistro, and a shop selling antiques and crafts. According to legend, a white cat was meant to ensure good luck for the residents of the castle, so look around for carvings featuring the creature. ⌚ 1 hr. Signposted off the Antrim rd., 2½ miles (4 km) north of the city center. ☎ 028/9077-6925. www.belfastcastle.co.uk. Free admission. Mon-Sat 9am-10pm; Sun 9am-6pm.



3 ★★ Kids **Cave Hill Country Park.**

This park atop a 360m (1,181-ft.) basalt cliff affords visitors panoramic views and walking trails past archaeological and historical sights. The **Cave Hill Visitor Centre**, on the second floor of Belfast Castle (see above), contains a diverting exhibition on the history of the park and the castle itself. At the moment, the park is under construction to improve the walking paths and add more steps along the trails, but the work should be finished by the time you visit. To explore the full circuit of Cave Hill Country Park, try the following marked

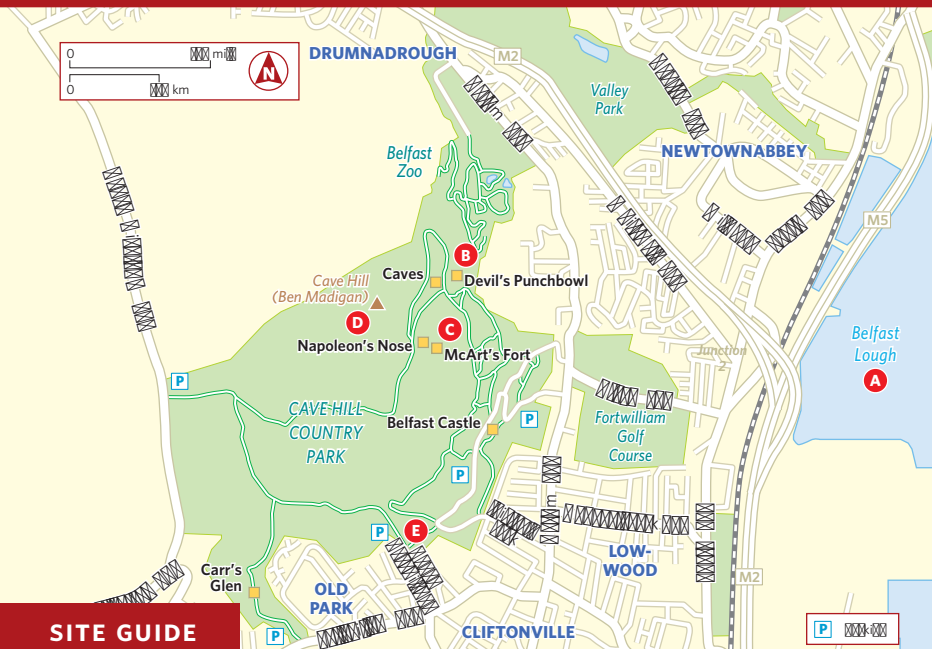
route (see p 393). It should be manageable for anyone of reasonable fitness, though it may be too challenging for children in a few places; ask for advice at the park visitor center in Belfast Castle before you set out. ⌚ 2 hr. (walking trail 3 hr.). www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parksandopenspaces. Off the Antrim rd., 4 miles (6.5 km) north of city center. Parking at Belfast Castle or Belfast Zoo.

Take the A20 east out of Belfast. Before Dundonald, turn right onto the A22 through Comber and follow signs for Castle Espie.

4 ★★ Kids **Castle Espie.** If you don't want to spend an entire day exploring Cave Hill, consider an afternoon detour to this marvelous wildlife center. It's home to an avian U.N. of rare migratory geese, ducks, and swans. A favorite of bird-watchers in search of waterfowl, the center attracts thousands of pale-bellied brents in early winter. ⌚ 2 hr. 78 Ballydrain Rd., Comber, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9187-4146. Tickets £5.50 (\$11) adults, £4 (\$8) seniors and students, £2.85 (\$5.70) kids. Mar-Sept Mon-Fri 10:30am-5:30pm, Sat-Sun 11am-5:30pm; Oct-Feb Mon-Fri 11am-4pm, Sat-Sun 11am-4:30pm. 21km (13 miles) southeast of Belfast, signposted from the A22 Comber-Killyleagh-Downpatrick rd.



> The view from Cave Hill.



SITE GUIDE

3 Cave Hill Country Park

Starting at Belfast Castle car park, walk up the marked footpath beside the interpretive panel on the left, just before the castle entrance. Turn right at the first junction you reach, and stay on this path through the woods, always turning left at any junctions or forks. This takes you to a plateau overlooking **A Belfast Lough**. The next path on your left leads around the **B Devil's Punchbowl** (a natural crater where Celtic tribesmen used to graze their sheep) and past one of the five caves thought to have been Neolithic iron mines, from which the park takes its name. Several ancient sites, often unmarked, are scattered about the place. From there the path veers right, up a hill. When you come to a cattle grid, veer left and follow the grass path up to **C McArt's Fort**, the remains of an ancient defensive hill fort in which Wolfe Tone and fellow United Irishmen planned the 1798 rebellion. It's mostly gone now, but you can explore the ruins, which sit atop the park's highest and most famous viewpoint. From here, join the main footpath again to make a gentle descent down the south side of **D Cave Hill**. Continue downhill, then take the next left turn,



which will take you all the way to the **E Upper Cavehill Road**. Continue along this footpath for a short way; then take the path on your left. Follow it over the small ridge, and you're back on the Belfast Castle estate. From here you can walk up the main driveway back to the car park. The whole trail is about 4½ miles (7.2km) long and takes roughly 3 hours to complete.



Belfast Shopping Best Bets

Most Stylish Stationery

Kozo Wedding Stationery, 18 North St. (p 396)

Best Designer Footwear

Rojo, 613 Lisburn Rd. (p 397)

Best Vintage Clothing

Rusty Zip, 28 Botanic Ave. (p 396)

Best Early-Bird Bargains

St. George's Market, May St. at Oxford St.
(p 397)

Best Way to Say "I Love You"

The Steensons, Bedford St. (p 396)

Best Antiques Store

Oakland Antiques, 135 Donegall Pass (p 395)

Best Irish Crafts

Craftworks Gallery, Bedford House, Bedford St.
(p 396)

Best Plane Reading

No Alibis, 83 Botanic Ave. (p 395)

Where to Score

Belfast is a rewarding place to shop. We recommend starting at Donegall Place, where the streets are lined with shops and Victorian arcades housing gift shops and jewelry stores. The newest shopping extravaganza is at Victoria Square, where a massive new upscale shopping mall opened in 2008. Aside from that, the town's main shopping street is Royal Avenue, home of well-known chains such as Waterstone's bookstore, Jaeger clothing store, and Virgin Music Megastore. The Castlecourt Shopping Centre on Royal Avenue houses more than 70 boutiques and shops.

Best Quality Souvenirs

The Wicker Man, 44–46 High St. (p 396)

Best Teenage Kicks

Good Vibrations, Winetavern St. (p 397)

> ABOVE Baked goods at St. George's Market. OPPOSITE The showroom at Oakland Antiques.



Belfast Shopping A to Z

Antiques & Art

★ Archives Antiques Centre

This labyrinth of collectibles sprawls across three floors filled with military memorabilia, books, Irish silver, and china. 88 Donegall Pass. ☎ 028/9023-2383.

★★ Oakland Antiques

On Belfast's antiques row, Donegall Pass, this is the biggest shop of them all, with an impressive array of Edwardian, Georgian, and Victorian silver, porcelain, and more. 135 Donegall Pass. ☎ 028/9023-0176. MC, V.

★★ Tom Caldwell Gallery

Come here for a selection of paintings, sculptures, and ceramics primarily by contemporary Irish artists. They also carry a range of designer furniture, including such zeitgeisty brands as Tonelli, Tisset-tanta, and Arflex. 429 Lisburn Rd. ☎ 028/9066-1890. www.tomcaldwellgallery.com. MC, V.

Books & Stationery

★ Bookshop at Queen's

Directly across from the university it serves, Bookshop at Queen's has a distinctly academic feel to it, but it's a fine bookstore by popular

measure as well, with an extensive range of Irish literature. There's a section devoted to various titles penned by the academics who reside across the street, which can make for an enlightening browse. 91 University Rd. ☎ 028/9066-6302. www.queensbookshop.co.uk. MC, V.

★★ No Alibis

Crime fiction is the mainstay of this quirky, absorbing little independent bookstore. Oddly, they also stockpile books devoted to American politics. In the snug little reading area at the back of the store, you can browse through your purchases over a cup of coffee. 83 Botanic Ave. ☎ 028/9031-9607. AE, MC, V.

Fashion & Clothing

★★★ The Bureau

Belfast's premier boutique for men's fashions—with trendy labels such as Paul Smith, Stone Island, and Etro—has come up in the world. The day this shop opened, during the height of the Troubles, its neighbors were a derelict burger joint and a newly bombed-out cafe. How times have changed! 44 & 46-50 Howard St. ☎ 028/9032-6100. MC, V.



> *The spanking new shopping mall at Victoria Square.*

★ Rusty Zip

A retro store with a decidedly groovy interior, this place sells all manner of vintage gear, from jeans and flares to big-collar shirts and miniskirts. Think Austin Powers with a Belfast twang. 28 Botanic Ave. ☎ 028/9032-6100. MC, V.

Household & Crafts

★ Craftworks Gallery

This gallery just behind City Hall is a one-stop shop for crafts from throughout the region. They also distribute free copies of the brochure “Crafts in Northern Ireland,” with details on local crafts and where to find them. Bedford House, Bedford St. ☎ 028/9024-4465. MC, V.

★★ Kozo Wedding Stationery

Worth a look even if you're not getting hitched, this wonderful little shop specializes in paper and stationery crafts from Asia and the Far East. The range of handmade paper—from Japan, India, China, and Nepal, among other places—is exquisite. They also do a great line in photo albums and journal books, which are bound on-site by the Cathedral Bindery. 18 North St. ☎ 028/9033-2321. www.kozowedding.com. MC, V.

★ Smyth's Irish Linens

If you want to stock up on fine Irish linen damask tablecloths, napkins, and handkerchiefs, head for this store in the heart of the city's prime shopping thoroughfare. They also carry other traditional gift items and offer VAT-free export. 65 Royal Ave. ☎ 028/9024-2232. MC, V.

★ Utopia

This is one of those gift shops that tries hard to be all things to all people. Consequently, the stock is eclectic (if you were hoping to find Belleek china and a Robin Hood-themed chess set on the same shopping trip, then this is the store for you). Yet it manages not to succumb to the leprechaun-and-Guinness fridge-magnet school of souvenirs. Fountain Centre, College St. ☎ 028/9024-1342. www.utopiaonline.co.uk. MC, V.

★★ The Wicker Man

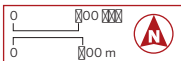
This is head and shoulders above the average emporium for Celtic-themed knickknacks. The rather utilitarian exterior conceals an excellent range of affordable art and Irish-made souvenirs. The exhibition space, showcasing the work of a different local artist every month, is usually worth a special trip. For the record, the shop name refers to an ancient Celtic rite in which people were purportedly burned alive inside a giant wicker effigy. 44–46 High St. ☎ 028/9024-3550. MC, V.

Jewelry

★★★ The Steensons

This is the main showroom of Bill and Christina Steenson, two of the most celebrated goldsmiths in Ireland. On display and for sale is the widest collection anywhere of the Steensons' unique gold and silver jewelry, as well as work by a select number of top designers from elsewhere. Bedford St. (behind Belfast City Hall). ☎ 028/9024-8269. www.thesteensons.com. MC, V.

Archives Antiques Centre **11**
 Bookshop at Queen's **14**
 The Bureau **6**
 Craftworks Gallery **8**
 Cultúrlann MacAdam
 Ó Fiaich **17**
 Good Vibrations **1**
 Kozo Wedding Stationery **3**
 No Alibis **13**
 Oakland Antiques **10**
 Rojo **15**
 Rusty Zip **12**
 Smyth's Irish Linens **2**
 St. George's Market **9**
 The Steensons **7**
 Tom Caldwell Gallery **16**
 Utopia **5**
 The Wicker Man **4**



Markets & Malls

★★ St. George's Market

This is Belfast's original variety market, dating from the 19th century and now standing across from the new Waterfront Hall. The market was completely restored in 1999 and is a colorful outlet for fresh fruit, flowers, fish, vegetables, clothing, crafts, and lots more. It opens every Friday starting at 6am; arrive early if you're bargain hunting. There's also a food and garden market here every Saturday starting at 9am. May St. at Oxford St. ☎ 028/9043-5704.

Music

★ Cultúrlann MacAdam Ó Fiaich

This huge cultural center, based in a former Presbyterian church, is a good source for traditional music. They also sell Irish-made crafts; run an Irish language bookshop; and host regular plays, readings, and exhibitions. Call ahead or go online to find out what's on. 216 Falls Rd. ☎ 028/9023-9303. www.culturlann.com. MC, V.

★★ Good Vibrations

Something of a legend in the Belfast music scene, this much-loved record store is finally trading

again after nearly 20 years out of business. It's owned by local boy and former punk-music mogul Terri Hooley, who ran Good Vibrations as a combined shop and independent music label from the 1970s to the early 1990s. President Bill Clinton was among those who sent good-luck wishes when Hooley announced he'd reopen the shop in the summer of 2008. Expect to find a strong range of collectibles, rock, jazz, and, of course, punk. Winetavern St. No phone. MC, V.

Shoes & Accessories

★★ Rojo

A must-stop for dedicated footwear followers, this small fashion boutique has an incredible range of designer shoes. Big names such as Gucci, Prada, and Kenzo share the shelves with a small but well-chosen range of original designs. 613 Lisburn Rd. ☎ 028/9066-6998. www.rojoshoes.co.uk. MC, V.



Belfast Restaurant Best Bets

Best Dining Room View

James Street South \$\$\$ 21 James St. S. (p 400)

Best Pub Lunch

John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant \$\$ 51 Donegall St. (p 400)

Most Unique Find

White's Tavern \$\$ 2-4 Winecellar Entry (p 401)

Most Imaginative Use of Ingredients

Cayenne \$\$\$ Shaftesbury Sq. (p 399)

Best in the University Quarter

Beatrice Kennedy \$\$\$ 44 University Rd. (p 399)

Most Impressive Chef's Résumé

Deanes \$\$\$ 36-40 Howard Place (p 399)

Best Value Lunch

Café Paul Rankin \$ 27-29 Fountain St. (p 399)

Best Chinese Food

Red Panda \$\$ 60 Great Victoria St. (p 400)

Belfast Dining

Belfast is not famed for its cuisine. A British journalist recalls how, back in the '70s, a local chef refused to serve his breakfast without a fried sausage on the grounds that "sausage is compulsory." Things are different now, happily. While it's still some way behind cosmopolitan Dublin, Belfast's restaurant scene is undeniably on the rise. It even has a Michelin-starred chef—Michael Deane, of **Deanes** on Howard Place.

Belfast has no particular restaurant quarter, although plenty of eateries line the Golden Mile, and the **Odyssey Complex** (☎ 028/ 9046-7700; www.theodyssey.co.uk) holds about a dozen places to eat, many geared to families with kids. It's a 5-minute walk across the weir from the Lagan Lookout in Belfast. It's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm, and Sunday noon to 6pm.

> ABOVE *Beatrice Kennedy in the University Quarter.*
OPPOSITE *The reasonably priced John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant.*



Belfast Restaurants A to Z

★★ Alden's *MODERN IRISH*

Alden's is one of the most consistently good restaurants in Belfast. The cooking is full of punch and yet thoughtfully restrained, while the atmosphere is low-key elegant. Desserts are wonderful, the wine list is intelligent, and the staff is eager to please. 229 Upper Newtownards Rd. ☎ 028/9065-0079. www.aldensrestaurant.com. Entrees £12-£16 (\$24-\$32). AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch daily; dinner Mon-Sat.

★★ Beatrice Kennedy *TRADITIONAL IRISH*

This is a sweet place in the University Quarter, with bare wood floors and neatly folded white linens. The menu is rich with traditional dishes, including roasted lamb and tasty stews, all served with home-baked bread. 44 University Rd. ☎ 028/9020-2290. www.beatricekennedy.co.uk. Entrees £14-£18 (\$28-\$36). MC, V. Dinner daily; lunch & dinner Sun.

★★ Café Paul Rankin *CAFE*

Owned by Paul Rankin, Northern Ireland's first celebrity chef, of Cayenne fame (see below), this casual cafe is an outstanding

value. Serving mostly upmarket sandwiches and soups, it makes a great place to stop for lunch or for coffee and a snack in the afternoon. 27-29 Fountain St. ☎ 028/9031-5090. www.rankinggroup.co.uk. Entrees £2-£5 (\$4-\$10). MC, V. 7:30am-6pm daily (until 9pm Thurs).

★★ Cayenne *MODERN IRISH*

Chef-owner Paul Rankin is known for pairing the best local produce with exotic ingredients. The wide-ranging menu offers everything from crispy aromatic pork belly to the braised shoulder and roast pepper haunch of Finnebrogue venison. Save room for the warm chocolate tart. 7 Lesley House, Shaftesbury Sq. ☎ 028/9033-1532. www.rankinggroup.co.uk. Entrees £11-£18 (\$22-\$36). AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch Tues-Fri; dinner daily.

★★★ Deanes *FUSION*

Michelin star-winning chef Michael Deane presides over the stove at dinner from Wednesday to Sunday at this sleek, modern restaurant. Deane's cooking is modern and sublime, a hip pairing of Asian ingredients with



> Once the doors open at Nick's Warehouse, the crowds rush in for reliably hearty, well-prepared food.

classic French methods. The atmosphere is relaxed—no need to wear a tie. 36–40 Howard Place. ☎ 028/9033-1134. www.michaeldeane.co.uk. Entrees £14–£20 (\$28–\$40). AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

*** **James Street South** MODERN IRISH

With its chic, minimalist interior brightened by floor-to-ceiling arched windows, this is one of the city's hot restaurants. The terrific kitchen delivers modern classics with an Irish twist. Portions are generous, and the wine list is excellent. 21 James St. ☎ 028/9043-4310. www.jamesstreetouth.co.uk. Entrees £12–£20 (\$24–\$40). AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon–Sat.

* **John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant** MODERN

IRISH The menu in this popular bar leans toward upscale Irish traditional pub food, making it an ideal spot for lunch. It also has some of the best Guinness in town. Happily, as

it aims to be true to the socialist principles of its namesake Irish politico, prices are extremely reasonable. 51 Donegall St. ☎ 028/9023-3768. www.thejohnhewitt.com. Entrees £5–£8 (\$10–\$16). MC, V. Lunch Mon–Sat (drinks until midnight daily).

** **Nick's Warehouse** MODERN IRISH

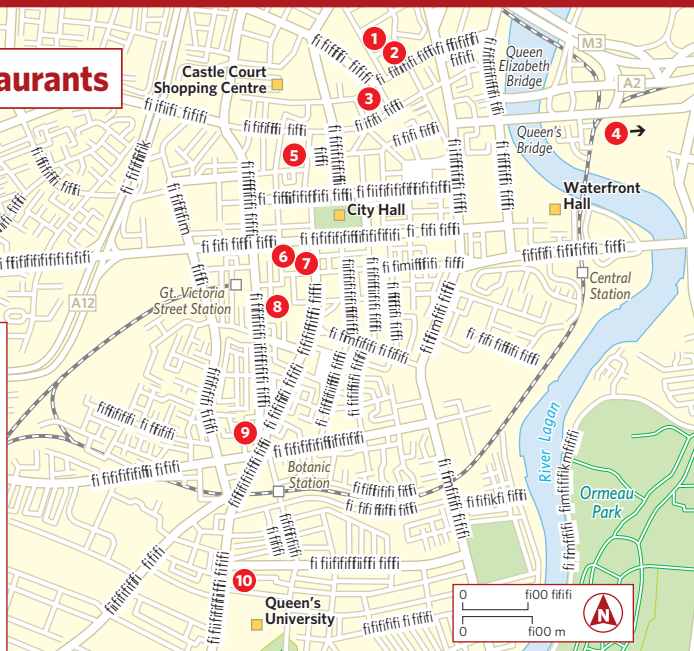
This extremely busy place offers a world-spanning menu of rib-sticking, hearty food. Nick Price gets his influence from everywhere—you might see Scandinavian dishes on the menu alongside Mediterranean ones—but the quality is consistently high. 35 Hill St. ☎ 028/9043-9690. www.nickswarehouse.co.uk. Entrees £7–£19 (\$14–\$38). AE, DC, MC, V. Lunch Mon–Fri; dinner Tues–Sat (drinks until midnight).

* **Red Panda** CHINESE

This small chain of upscale Chinese restaurants is relentlessly popular, and this branch on

Belfast Restaurants

- Alden's **4**
- Beatrice Kennedy **10**
- Café Paul Rankin **5**
- Cayenne **9**
- Deanes **6**
- James Street South **7**
- John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant **1**
- Nick's Warehouse **2**
- Red Panda **8**
- White's Tavern **3**



the Golden Mile may be the busiest of all. The attraction is the authentic food served in bright, pleasant surroundings. The menu has all the usual favorites, and it's a great break from the hearty local fare. 60 Great Victoria St. ☎ 028/9080-8700. www.theredpanda.co.uk. Entrees £6-£8 (\$12-\$16). MC, V. Lunch & dinner Mon-Sat.

★ **White's Tavern** *TRADITIONAL IRISH*

This may well be Belfast's most popular place to have lunch. One of the city's many historic pubs, White's is tucked away on a lane between Rosemary and High streets. It's hard to find but worth ferreting out, as it's got all the low beams and wood floors you might hope for in a pub from 1630. The menu features warming, traditional dishes like Irish stew, sausage and mashed potatoes, and fish and chips. 2-4 Winecellar Entry. ☎ 028/9024-3080. Entrees £5-£8 (\$10-\$16). No credit cards. Mon-Sat noon-6pm.



➤ Perennially popular since 1630, White's Tavern.



Belfast Hotel Best Bets

Best Newcomer

Tara Lodge \$ 36 Cromwell Rd. (p 405)

Best for Party Animals

Benedict's \$ 7-21 Bradbury Place (p 403)

Best for Titanic Fans

Ash Rowan \$\$ 12 Windsor Ave. (p 403)

Most Historic Inn

The Old Inn \$\$ Main St., Crawfordsburn (p 405)

Most Chic Boutique

TENsq \$\$\$ 10 Donegall Sq. (p 405)

Most Flattering Color Scheme

Malmaison Belfast \$\$ 34-38 Victoria St. (p 404)

Best Ride from the Airport

Merchant Hotel \$\$\$ 35-39 Waring St. (p 404)

Most Welcoming Survivor of Old Belfast

Europa Hotel \$\$ Great Victoria St. (p 404)

Rising Standards

Belfast's hotel sector still has some way to go in terms of quality and choice—particularly at the budget end. But it has made great progress in the last few years, and there are now, at last, at least a couple of good choices in every price range. We're encouraged by the arrival of places like Tara Lodge, one of a new breed of reasonably priced, comfortable boutique hotels that we hope is a sign of good things to come.

In County Antrim, 5 miles (8km) from Belfast International, Ballealy Cottage (☎ 028 670-4733) sleeps five to seven people in a winsomely quirky Victorian gameskeeper's cottage surrounded by forest and wildlife. Rates average £600 per week in high season.

> ABOVE The opulent Great Room at the Merchant Hotel. OPPOSITE The Culloden Hotel has grand style on a sprawling estate.



Belfast Hotels A to Z

★★ Ash Rowan

On a quiet, tree-lined street in a residential neighborhood, this four-story Victorian house near Queen's University was once the home of Thomas Andrews, a designer of the *Titanic* who went down with the ship. Owner Evelyn Hazlett has outfitted it with country-style furnishings, family heirlooms, and antiques, along with bouquets of fresh flowers from the garden. Beds are exceptionally firm and dressed in fine Irish linens. The mood here is relaxed, with morning papers and late breakfasts. The rates include a choice of nine breakfasts, including the "Ulster fry" (scrambled eggs, smoked salmon, kippers), or vegetarian options, such as flambéed mushrooms. The location is a short stroll into the city center. 12 Windsor Ave. (between Lisburn and Malone roads). ☎ 028/9066-1758. 5 units. Double £90-£100 (\$180-\$200). MC, V.

★ Benedict's

This is one of a new generation of ultrahip small hotels that are springing up in central Belfast. The rooms are clean and modern with huge beds and Jacuzzi baths, and staff members are pleasant and helpful. The downside is the

noise—the bar and restaurant are both very popular nightspots (the bar has a DJ or live music every night). Rooms are on the third floor, though, above the quieter guests-only bar, so it's not as bad as it could be. This place is likely to suit someone looking for a party atmosphere, rather than those looking for peace and quiet. 7-21 Bradbury Place, Shaftesbury Sq. ☎ 028/9059-1999. www.benedictshotel.co.uk. 17 units. Double £80-£90 (\$160-\$180). AE, MC, V.

★ Culloden Hotel HOLLYWOOD

This elegant hotel is 8km (5 miles) east of the city proper, on the shore of Belfast Lough in County Down. Sprawling across acres of secluded gardens and woodlands, the manor house was originally built as a palace for the bishops of Down. Later, it was sold and remained a private home until it was converted into a hotel in 1963. It has grand style, with fine antiques, plasterwork and paintings, Louis XV chandeliers, an unexpectedly modern spa, and exceptional service. 142 Bangor Rd., Hollywood, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9042-1066. www.hastingshotels.com. 79 units. Double £110-£120 (\$220-\$240). AE, DC, MC, V.



> *Trendy TENSq.*

★ **Europa Hotel**

Once the IRA's favorite hotel target in Belfast, this is where visiting dignitaries traditionally lodge. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton stays here when he's in town, and for good reason—the lobby is warm and welcoming with Irish art on the walls and a fire crackling in the hearth. Hotel workers are as friendly as Belfastians get. An ongoing renovation has left the hotel modern but not soulless. The guest rooms are spacious and filled with mahogany furnishings, rich fabrics, and marble bathrooms. The downsides are the restaurant and bar, which lack the style displayed in the rest of the hotel. But there are excellent restaurants on the Golden Mile (as the street out front is known), and one of the city's best historic pubs, the Crown Liquor Saloon, is just across the street. Great Victoria St. ☎ 028/9027-1066. www.hastingshotels.com. 240 units. Double £115–£170 (\$230–\$340). AE, DC, MC, V.

★★ **Malmaison Belfast**

This hotel—part of the sophisticated British Malmaison chain—is cool, sleek, and modern. It's so decked out in eggplant and black hues that one British newspaper described it as looking like "Dracula's living room." Created from two classically ornate Italianate warehouses that were designed by William Hastings in the mid-1850s, it has a cozy sophistication. Rooms are not huge, but they'll appeal to fans of modern. The color scheme includes neutral walls with black touches and blood-red crushed-velvet covers on the firm orthopedic beds. All the latest gadgetry awaits your idle moments, including plasma TVs, DVDs, and free Internet service. The bar and brasserie are (surprise, surprise) sleek and modern in design, with an emphasis on black (it



> *An Italianate exterior belies Malmaison's decidedly modern interior.*

makes everybody look thinner, you know). 34–38 Victoria St., ☎ 028/9022-0200. www.malmaison.com. 59 units. Double £100–£140 (\$200–\$280). AE, DC, MC, V.

★ **Malone Lodge Hotel**

In the leafy university neighborhood south of the city center, the Malone Lodge has plenty of fans drawn by its unfussy but efficient style. Rooms are large, and decor varies—most are relatively tame with cream wallpaper and traditional wood furniture. Generally, the rooms have everything you need—televisions, power showers, Wi-Fi—and there's a handy restaurant and bar as well. Staff members are reliably friendly and helpful. 60 Eglantine Ave. ☎ 028/9038-8000. www.malonelodgehotel.com. 50 units. Double £90–£125 (\$180–\$250). Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V.

★★ **Merchant Hotel**

Luxurious, elegant, draped in rich fabrics, and equipped with the latest business technology, this hotel converted from a former bank building embodies the North's rebirth. **The Great Room** restaurant is the most beautiful space. Its soaring ceilings, gilded plasterwork frieze, Corinthian columns, and marble floors make a breakfast of eggs and bacon seem entirely wrong, and champagne and caviar seem so right. Guest rooms have silk wallpaper, designer

Belfast Hotels

- Ash Rowan **10**
- Benedict's **8**
- Culloden Hotel **3**
- Europa Hotel **6**
- Malmaison Belfast **2**
- Malone Lodge Hotel **9**
- Merchant Hotel **1**
- The Old Inn **4**
- Tara Lodge **7**
- TENsq **5**



carpets in vivid colors, and king-size beds draped in the softest, thickest blankets. Check the website for discounted bargains. 35-39 Waring St. ☎ 028/9023-4888. www.themerchant-hotel.com. 26 units. Double £220 (\$440). AE, DC, MC, V.

*** The Old Inn CRAWFORDSBURN

When the author C. S. Lewis wrote about this historic coaching inn of North County Down, about 10 minutes' drive from central Belfast, it was already very old. Records date it from 1614, and those hoping for a historic place to stay should look no farther. Its **Parlour Bar and Lounge** are still topped by thatched roofs, and its crackling fire has warmed the toes of visiting dignitaries. You can stay in one of the large, beautifully decorated rooms, many with polished wood floors and some with excellent antiques. Or isolate yourself in the private cottage, which comes with its own fireplace. The food in the on-site restaurant, **1614**, has won plaudits. The relaxing bistro and Parlour Bar serve more economical fare. Main St., Crawfordsburn, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9185-3255. www.theoldinn.com. 32 units. Double £100-£125 (\$200-\$250); £225 (\$250) for the cottage. AE, MC, V.

** Tara Lodge

This new B&B in the Queen's Quarter, just outside the city center, is the sort of accommodations that Belfast really needs right now: boutique-stylish, comfortable, and inexpensive. Rooms are on the small side, but the space is well used, with firm, comfortable beds and subtle lighting. All rooms have modern touches, such as flatscreen TVs and Wi-Fi. The breakfasts are excellent—especially the homemade porridge. This looks to be the antithesis to all those horrible, nicotine-stained B&Bs one used to encounter in Belfast at this end of the price range. 36 Cromwell Rd., Botanic Avenue. ☎ 028/9059-0900. www.taralodge.com. Double £85 (\$170). AE, MC, V.

* TENsq

This funky boutique hotel aims to emulate the exotic luxury of Shanghai's Pudong district with small bedrooms and low-slung beds, white linens and dark headboards, and cream carpet. Armoires, shutters, and double doors are all inlaid with white opal glass. The overall feel is one of elegant minimalism. In Belfast, it doesn't get much trendier than this. 10 Donegall Sq. ☎ 028/9024-1001. www.ten-sq.com. 23 units. Double £160-£240 (\$320-\$480). AE, MC, V.



Belfast Nightlife Best Bets

Best Cocktails

Irene & Nan's, 12 Brunswick St. (p 408)

Best Live Music

Empire Music Hall, 42 Botanic Ave. (p 407)

Best for a Quiet Pint

John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant, 51 Donegall St. (p 409)

Best for Club-Hopping 20-Somethings

Bar Bacca/La Lea, 43 Franklin St. (p 407)

Best Old-World Atmosphere

Crown Liquor Saloon, 46 Great Victoria St. (p 408)

Most Insane Theme Nights

Kremlin, 96 Donegall St. (p 407)

Best for Style Watchers

Apartment, 2 Donegall Sq. (p 408)

Best for Old Sea Dogs

Pat's Bar, 19 Prince's Dock St. (p 409)

For the Young & the Restless

Belfast has a plethora of historic pubs where the crowds tend to be local and friendly, but the big news here in recent years has been its fast-growing new generation of hip bars geared to the young and trendy. The late-night places are mostly clustered in the University Quarter, while the pubs are spread around town. If you're drawn to traditional pubs, several of the best are hidden away in the pedestrian lanes off Donegall Place. Pub hours are generally Monday to Saturday from 11:30am to 11pm and Sunday from 12:30 to 2:30pm and from 7 to 10pm, although some open until 1am, especially on Friday and Saturday. Bars stay open later, and nightclubs tend not to get busy until after the pubs close; admission ranges from £3 to £15.

> You'll never lose track of time at Irene & Nan's.



Belfast Nightlife A to Z

Clubs

★★ Bar Bacca/La Lea

Essentially two bars in one, this has been Belfast's most stylish nightclub for several years now. It's a sensory experience, with classic architecture, soaring ceilings, and an Eastern bent—a huge Buddha head hangs above the dance floor, incense burns, and bodies dance the night away. The private bar evokes a decadent Bedouin tent. There's a strict door policy—you'll have a better chance of getting in if you're dressed to kill. 43 Franklin St. ☎ 028/9023-0200. www.lalea.com, www.barbacca.com.

★ Milk Bar Club

In the city's Cathedral Quarter, this is one of Belfast's hottest clubs, with music 7 nights a week and a devoted 20-something clientele. Inside, you'll find a riot of color, energy, and noise—everything from house and disco to R & B. 10-14 Tomb St. ☎ 028/9027-8876. www.clubmilk.com.

DJ Bars

★ Mezza(nine) at Robinson's

This trendy, modern bar next door to the Crown Liquor Saloon attracts Belfast's young and

beautiful, with two floors of bars, pounding live music, and top local and national DJs spinning tunes late into the night. 38-42 Great Victoria St. ☎ 028/9024-7447.

Gay Bars & Clubs

★★ Kremlin

This clever, Soviet-themed bar is open 7 nights a week but best known for its Saturday-night party, "Revolution." It's split into three areas: a cocktail bar, a disco bar, and a club section, where resident DJs and visiting acts play live. Theme nights encompass everything from *The Wizard of Oz* to the Kremlin State Fair, complete with games and circus acts. We're not sure what Lenin would have thought, but it's all in the spirit of open-minded fun. 96 Donegall St. ☎ 028/9031-6060. www.kremlin-belfast.com.

Live Music Bars & Pubs

★★ Empire Music Hall

This is a grand place—a converted Victorian church that has become legendary on the Irish music and bar scenes. It has three floors of bars and music, with different styles represented on different nights—jazz on Tuesday, Irish traditional on Wednesday, blues Thursday, and rock

> Bar Bacca is swanky with an Eastern flair.



> *The church-cum-concert venue at Empire Music Hall.*

Friday and Saturday nights. There's also a semi-regular comedy club on Tuesdays; call ahead or check the website for details. 42 Botanic Ave. ☎ 028/9024-9276. www.thebelfastempire.com.

★★ **Limelight & Katy Daly's**

Pub and club morph into one venue here. Rock bands regularly perform in the music club space, while the stripped-down pub is one of the best places in Belfast to hang out, take in the music, and down a few pints. The crowd is youngish, and the mood is usually friendly and untrendy. 17-19 Ormeau Ave. ☎ 028/9032-5942. www.thelimelightbelfast.com.

★ **Rotterdam**

This small, traditional place in the Cathedral Quarter eschews modern annoyances—you'll find no TVs above the bar here. Instead, there are roaring fires and good pub food, as well as excellent pints of Guinness. This is one of the better music pubs in town, so expect jazz on Tuesdays, blues on Wednesdays, acoustic on Thursdays, and a mix of good sounds on the weekend. 54 Pilot St. ☎ 028/9074-6021.

Pubs

★★ **Apartment**

If you crave a good cocktail in sophisticated surroundings with a 20- to 30-something crowd of Belfast's beautiful people, then this is the place. It has dubbed itself Belfast's "only style bar," and its smooth look clearly appeals to Belfast's best DJs, who are regularly at the turntables. Upscale, city-center style is the name of the game here.

2 Donegall Sq. ☎ 028/9050-9777. www.apartmentbelfast.com.

★★★ **Crown Liquor Saloon**

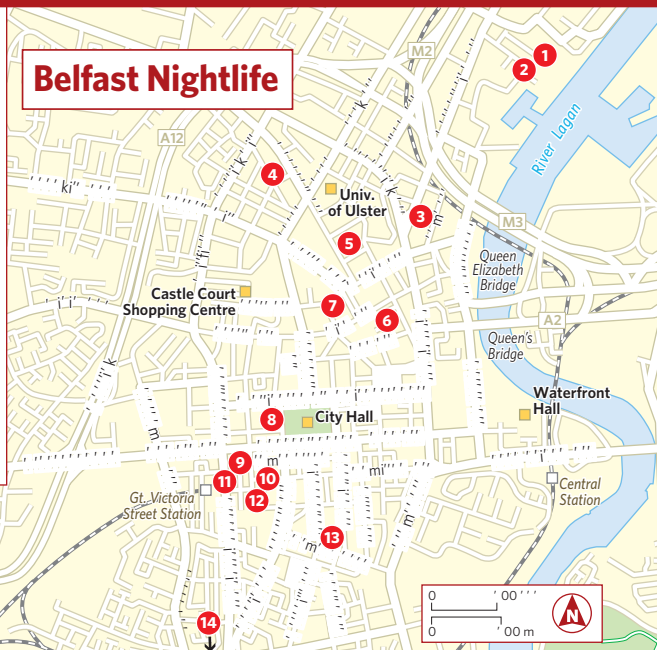
Opposite the Europa Hotel and the Grand Opera House, this gas-lit old alehouse has what many architecture buffs believe to be the finest example of Victorian Gothic decor in the country. If Harry Potter had become a publican, he probably would have opened a place that looks like this, with its stained-glass windows, pounded-tin ceiling, and creaking booths with smoked-glass dividers. Mythological beasts with shields guard the 10 dark wood private rooms. Other old-fashioned details include gunmetal plates for striking matches (though smoking is now illegal inside), little windows to peep discreetly through, and an antique system of bells that once summoned service. 46 Great Victoria St. ☎ 028/9027-9901. www.crownbar.com.

★★★ **Irene & Nan's**

The young and trendy crowd into this elaborately decorated bar every night. Its name is an homage to two glamorous retirees who hung out in a nearby pub. Taking their style to heart, this place drowns in designer chic, with a slight 1950s retro theme—kitsch art on the walls, golden brown tables that look like they've come straight from the Formica factory, and original Bakelite clocks lined up along the illuminated wall behind the bar. The mezzanine floor is the most sumptuous, but the music is excellent on all levels. The cocktail selection is good, and the

- Apartment **8**
 Bar Bacca/La Lea **10**
 Crown Liquor Saloon **9**
 Empire Music Hall **14**
 Irene & Nan's **12**
 John Hewitt Bar
 & Restaurant **5**
 Kremlin **4**
 Limelight & Katy Daly's **13**
 Mezza(nine) at Robinson's **11**
 Milk Bar Club **3**
 Morning Star **6**
 Pat's Bar **1**
 Rotterdam **2**
 White's Tavern **7**

Belfast Nightlife



in-house bistro is not bad at all. 12 Brunswick St.
 ☎ 028/9023-9123. www.ireneandnans.com.

★★ John Hewitt Bar & Restaurant

This centrally located joint—named after a local socialist hero—is an exquisitely rare thing: a modern bar with no televisions and no gaming machines. During the day and early in the evening, the low rumble of conversation is the loudest thing you'll hear here. In the evening, there's often music, including folk several nights a week and jazz on Fridays. The food is good here, too. This one is for the grown-ups. 51 Donegall St. ☎ 028/9023-3768. www.thejohnhewitt.com.

★★ **Morning Star** This beautifully restored old pub tucked away in Pottingers Entry arcade is a nice, traditional place. It dates from 1810, and may be even older. It was once the final stop of the Dublin-to-Belfast stagecoach; its horseshoe-shaped bar may be a result of that history. It still has its original facade and the wooden snugs in which weary stagecoach travelers once rested. It's a good place for lunch and evening drinking. 17-19 Pottingers Entry.
 ☎ 028/9023-5986.

★ Pat's Bar

For a taste of Belfast's harbor atmosphere, join the sailors, dockers, and businesspeople at this pub at the gates of Prince's Dock. Cross its red-tile floor to the antique hand-carved beech bar, and then relax in its pine-wood surroundings. There's an interesting collection of memorabilia—much of it given to the bar's owner by sailors—clogs, swords, a telescope, and a bayonet. There's traditional Irish music on Friday and Saturday nights at 9pm. 19 Prince's Dock St.
 ☎ 028/9074-4524.

★★ White's Tavern

Tucked into a historic cobblestone trading lane in the city center, this old tavern was established in 1630 as a wine shop. It's full of old barrels and hoists, ornate snugs, brick arches, large copper measures, framed newspaper clippings of 200-year-old vintage quill pens, and other memorabilia. It's a good pub for conversation and browsing, and it features traditional music every Friday and Sunday, as well as quiz nights, darts, and theme nights. 2-4 Winecellar Entry (between High and Rosemary sts.). ☎ 028/9033-0988. www.whitestavern.co.uk.

Carrickfergus Castle & Belfast Lough

Locals like to say that Carrickfergus was thriving when Belfast was a sandbank, and looking around its winding medieval streets at the edge of the sea, it's easy to believe. In 1180 John de Courcy, a Norman, built a massive keep at Carrickfergus, the first real Irish castle, to guard the approach to the strategically critical Belfast Lough. Even today, although the town spreads for several miles in each direction along the shore, the huge, forbidding castle is still its center. The narrow streets across from the castle follow the historic winding pattern of medieval roads, and you can still find some of the old city walls.

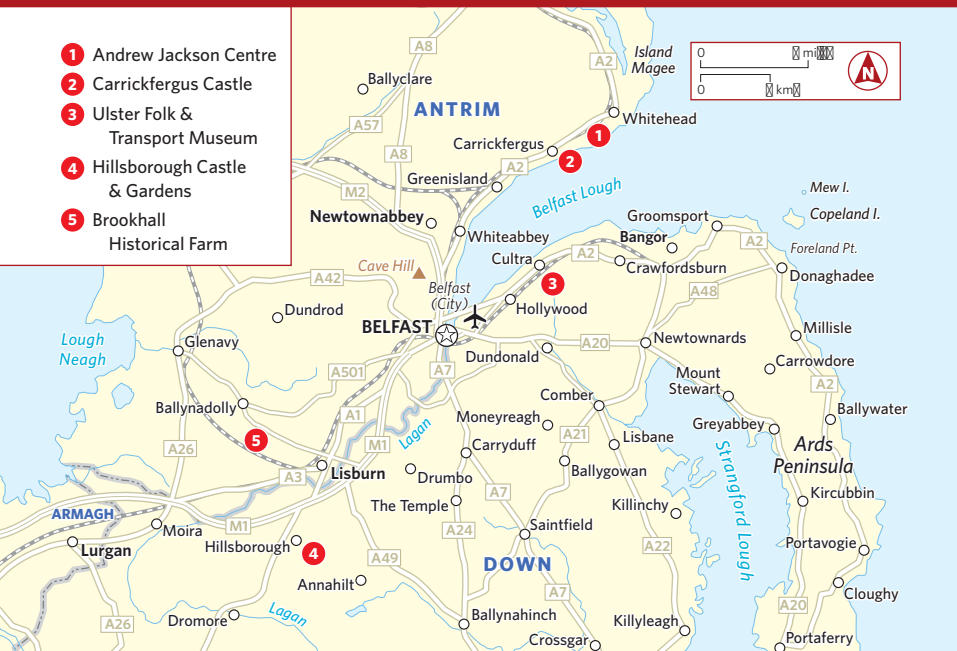


> Kids will love the giant Chutes and Ladders board at Carrickfergus.

START Carrickfergus is on the A2, 12 miles (19km) north of Belfast. **TRIP LENGTH** 40 miles (64 km).

1 ★ Andrew Jackson Centre. This one-story cottage with an earthen floor and open fireplace was the ancestral home of Andrew Jackson, seventh president of the United States. His parents emigrated to America in 1765. The house now contains a display on Jackson's life and career and Ulster's connections with the former British colony across the pond. ⌚ 30 min. Boneybefore, Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9336-6455. Free admission. Year-round daily 2-6pm; June-Sept Mon-Fri 10am-1pm. Reduced hours Apr-May and Oct. Closed Nov-Mar.

2 ★ kids Carrickfergus Castle. This impressive Norman castle looms darkly over the entrance to Belfast Lough, where William of Orange landed on June 14, 1690, en route to the Battle of the Boyne. The central keep inside dates to the 12th century, the thick outer walls were completed 100 years later, and the gun ports are a relatively new addition at only 400 years old. The castle has withstood sieges by Edward the Bruce in 1315 and King John in 1210, though it was temporarily captured by the French in 1760. The outside is more impressive than the inside, which has been largely dedicated to inspiring children's imaginations. Much of the remains of the castle walls were closed to the public on our visit, so we couldn't take in the view from there. In the summer, medieval banquets, a medieval fair, and a



- 1 Andrew Jackson Centre
- 2 Carrickfergus Castle
- 3 Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
- 4 Hillsborough Castle & Gardens
- 5 Brookhall Historical Farm

crafts market are held, adding a touch of play and pageantry. ☉ 1 hr. Marine Hwy., Antrim St., Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9335-1273. Tickets £4 (\$8) adults, £3 (\$6) seniors and kids. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–4pm.

Take the A2 northeast to Cultra. 6¼ miles (11km).

3 ★ kids Ulster Folk & Transport Museum (Cultra). A short drive around to the opposite shore of Belfast Lough brings you to this intriguing pair of museums grouped together on a sprawling, 70-hectare (173-acre) site. The outdoor Folk Museum includes a collection of 19th-century buildings saved from the bulldozer's path and moved here intact from their original sites. You can walk among farmhouses, mills, and churches; and explore rural schools, a forge, a bank, a print shop, and more. Actors in period dress reenact tasks of daily life—cooking over an open hearth, plowing the fields with horses, thatching roofs, and practicing traditional Ulster crafts such as textile making, spinning, quilting, lace making, printing, spade making, and shoemaking. The Transport Museum's collection ranges from donkey carts to DeLoreans, and there is a

permanent exhibition on the *Titanic*. ☉ 2 hr. 153 Bangor Rd., Cultra, Holywood. ☎ 028/9042-8428 or 028/9042-1444 for 24-hr. information. www.uftm.org.uk. Day ticket to both museums £7 (\$14) adults; £4 (\$8) seniors, students, and kids; £19 (\$38) families. Mar–June Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 11am–6pm; July–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 11am–6pm; Oct–Feb Mon–Fri 10am–4pm, Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 11am–5pm.

Return to Belfast and take the M1 southwest. Just past Lisburn, turn left onto the A1 and follow signs for Hillsborough Castle. 20.2 miles (32.5 km).

4 ★★ Hillsborough Castle & Gardens. This 18th-century mansion is the official residence of Queen Elizabeth II in Northern Ireland, and members of the royal family still use it on the rare occasions that they visit. From 1922 to 1972, it was also home to the Governor of Northern Ireland—although the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is still based here, making it the British government's de facto base in the region. Hillsborough gained worldwide fame in 1998, as the elegant backdrop for talks leading up to the Good Friday Agreement, and previous visitors include U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Unsurprisingly, then, this is a building



> **THIS PAGE** Back to the future: a DeLorean at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Built in 1180, Carrickfergus was the first real Irish castle.

that has seen its fair share of controversy over the years, although it's no less impressive a place for that. Entry is by guided tour, including the regal staterooms and the beautifully manicured grounds, which include a rose garden and peaceful lakeside walks. Usually, Hillsborough is open to the public in May and June only, but this can be extended if there's a major exhibition running. Tickets are sold at the Hillsborough Tourist Information Centre, located just outside the grounds, and you don't usually have to book in advance. ⌚ 1 hr. **The Square**, Hillsborough, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9268-1309; visitor center ☎ 028/9268-9717. Tickets £5 (\$10); admission to grounds only £2.50 (\$5). May-June Sat 10:30am-4pm. Last tour 4pm.

Turn left onto Main St. Fork left at Culcavy Rd. north to the B104. Turn left and follow signs to the Brookhall Historical Farm. 6 miles (9.5 km).

★ **Brookhall Historical Farm.** Kids who've run out of verses for "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" will love this rare-breeds farm just outside Lisburn, a small town near Belfast. It's a working farm, and you can wander the grounds and meet a variety of unusual-looking animals, from African pygmy goats to Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, in addition to a more humble stock of geese, ducks, rabbits, and donkeys. You can

Red Hand of Ulster

Around Belfast and Northern Ireland, you'll frequently come across representations of a red hand. It's carved in door frames, painted on walls and ceilings, and even planted in red flowers in gardens. Known as the Red Hand of Ulster, it is one of the symbols of the region. According to one version of the old tale, the hand can trace its history from a battle between two men competing to be king of Ulster. They held a race (some say by boat, others say it took place on horseback) and agreed that the first man to touch Ulster soil would win. As one man fell behind, he pulled his sword and cut off his right hand, then with his left, flung the bloody hand ahead of his competitor, winning the right to rule.

wander the well-maintained grounds, which include a restored 12th-century church. The site also contains a small museum devoted to traditional farming methods from the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. It's all very gentle, rustic fun. ⌚ 1hr. **2 Horse Park**, Ballinderry Rd., Lisburn, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9262-1712. Tickets £3 (\$6) adults, £2.50 (\$5) seniors, £1.50 (\$3) kids. Easter-Oct Wed-Sat 11am-5pm, Sun 2-6pm. On the B104, just off the A26, about 11 miles (18km) southeast of Belfast.



The Ards Peninsula

The Ards Peninsula, beginning about 10 miles (16 km) east of Belfast, curls around the western shore of Strangford Lough. This bird sanctuary and wildlife reserve is a place of great natural beauty. A couple of roads traverse the peninsula: the A2 (coast road) and the A20 (Lough road), which is the more scenic of the two.

START **Nendrum Monastic Site** is signposted from Lisbane, off the A22 just south of Comber. **TRIP LENGTH 121.5 miles (195.75 km).**

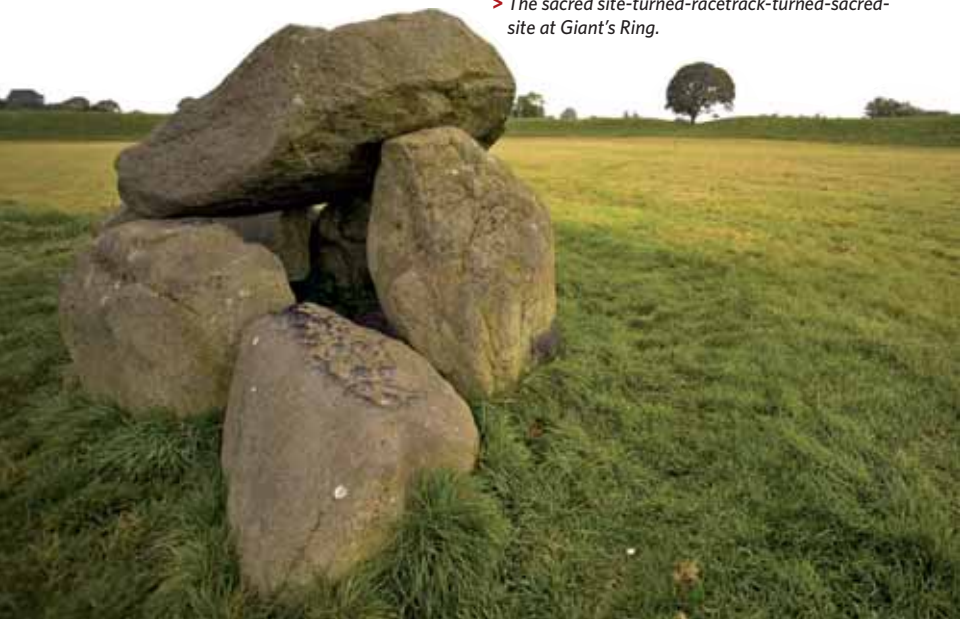
1 ★★ Nendrum Monastic Site. Hidden on an isolated island, this site dates from the 5th century, when it was founded by St. Mochaoi (St. Mahee). This site is much older than Grey Abbey across the water, and the remains of the ancient community are fascinating. Foundations show the outline of ancient churches, a round tower, and beehive cells. There are concentric stone ramparts and a sundial, reconstructed from long-broken pieces. The visitor center presents informative videos and exhib-

its. The road to Mahee Island crosses a causeway to Reagh Island and a bridge still protected by the 15th-century Mahee Castle. ☉ 45 min. The site is signposted from Lisbane, on the A20 south of Comber, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9754-2547. Free admission. Site 24 hr. Visitor center Apr–Sept Tues–Sat 10am–7pm, Sun 2–7pm; Oct–Mar Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–4pm.

Take the A22 south. Outside Downpatrick, turn left onto the A25 and follow signs for Castle Ward. 20.7 miles (33 km).

2 ★ Kids Castle Ward. About 2km (1¼ miles) west of Strangford Village is this grand manor house dating from 1760. A hybrid of architectural styles melding Gothic with classical, it sits

> *The sacred site-turned-racetrack-turned-sacred-site at Giant's Ring.*





on a 280-hectare (692-acre) country estate of formal gardens, woodlands, lake lands, and seashore. Inside, kids can dress up in period clothes and play with period toys, or they can ride a tractor-trailer out to see the farm animals. **Note:** If you don't mind skipping the inside of the house, you can visit the grounds for about half the house ticket price. ⌚ 1 hr. Strangford, Co. Down. ☎ 028/4488-1204. www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Tickets to house, gardens, and grounds £6 (\$12) adults, £3 (\$6) kids. House Sept–June Sat–Sun 1–6pm; July–Aug daily 1–6pm. Grounds open daily Feb to mid-Jan 10am–4pm; April–Sept open til 8pm; closed late Jan.

Take the A25 to Strangford. Catch the Strangford-Portaferry car ferry (£8.50/\$14 return per car and driver, plus £1.80/\$3 per passenger; sailings every hour and half hour). Follow signs to Exploris from the ferry port. Distance: 6.6 miles (10.5 km). Overland, take the N25 towards Downpatrick and turn right onto the A22. Then loop around Strangford Lough on the A21 and A20 to Portaferry. 45.6 miles (73 km).

3 ★ kids Exploris. This cheery, kid-focused aquarium concentrates on sea life native to Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea. Inside, the mixture of displays ranges from educational but



> Visitors get up close and personal with local species like the Thornback Ray at Exploris aquarium.



> Visitors to the National Trust-owned Mount Stewart House can take part in gardening activities.

dull models of the Strangford Lough ecosystem, to lively giant aquariums filled with local and regional sea life, to the downright fun seal sanctuary. Along with its splashy occupants, the aquarium complex houses a cafe where you can rest and a gift shop where you can buy fish-related key rings, as well as a park, a picnic area, and a children's playground. ⌚ 1 hr. Castle St., Portaferry, Co. Down. ☎ 028/4272-8062. www.exploris.org.uk. Tickets £7 (\$14) adults, £4 (\$8) kids. Apr–Aug Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat 11am–6pm, Sun 1–6pm; Sept–Mar Mon–Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 11am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm.

Take the A20 north and follow signs for Mount Stewart House. 14 miles (22.5 km).

4 ★★ Mount Stewart House. Once the home of Lord Castlereagh, this 18th-century house sits on the eastern shore of Strangford Lough. Its lush gardens hold an impressive array of rare and unusual plants. Inside, the art collection is excellent, including the *Hambletonian* by George Stubbs and family portraits by Pompeo Batoni and Anton Raphael Mengs. The Temple of the Winds, a rare 18th-century banquet house, is also on the estate, but it's open only on public holidays. ⌚ 1 hr. On the east shore of Strangford Lough (A20), southeast of Newtownards, Co. Down. ☎ 028/4278-8387. www.nationaltrust.org.uk. House and garden tickets £6 (\$12) adults, £3 (\$6) kids. House Mar–Apr and Oct (except Easter week) Sat–Sun noon–6pm; Easter week daily noon–6pm; May Wed–Mon 1–6pm; June daily 1–6pm; July–Aug daily 1–6pm; Sept Wed–Mon noon–6pm. Closed Nov–Feb.

Continue on the A20 through Newtownards toward Belfast. Just outside the city, turn left

onto the A55 and follow signs to the Giant's Ring, just outside the village of Ballynahatty. 19.4 miles (31 km).

5 ★★ Giant's Ring. This massive, mysterious, prehistoric earthwork, 180m (590 ft.) in diameter, has at its center a megalithic chamber with a single capstone. Ancient burial rings like this one were long thought to be protected by fairies, and thus were left untouched, but this one was quite an exception—in the 19th century, it was used as a racetrack, and the high embankment around it served as grandstands. Today, its dignity has been restored, and it is a place of wonder for the few who visit. Sadly, it is largely neglected by tourists. ⌚ 20 min. Ballynahatty, Co. Down. Free admission.

Backtrack to the B23 and head south to Ballylesson. In the town center, turn left onto Fort Rd. At the junction with the B178, turn right and then left down Carr Rd. Join the A24 going south to Ballynahinch; then follow the B7 heading west out of town. Take this road through Dromara and follow signs for Slieve Croob. 22.6 miles (36 km).

6 ★ Legananny Dolmen. This renowned, impressive granite dolmen (Neolithic tomb) on the southern slope of Slieve Croob looks, in the words of archaeologist Peter Harbison, like “a coffin on stilts.” This must be one of the most photographed dolmens in Ireland, and you must see it up close to fully appreciate its size. The massive capstone seems weightlessly poised on its supporting uprights. ⌚ 20 min. Slieve Croob, Co. Down. Take A24 from Belfast to Ballynahinch, B7 to Dromara, and then ask directions.

Belfast Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR Belfast has two airports—**Belfast International** (☎ 028/9448-4848; www.belfastairport.com) and **Belfast City Airport** (☎ 028/9093-9093; www.belfastcityairport.com). **BY TRAIN** Belfast has two train stations—Great Victoria Street Station and Belfast Central Station. Most trains use the latter. Contact **North-eastern Ireland Railways** (☎ 028/9066-6630) for tickets. **BY BUS** **Ulsterbus** (☎ 028/9033-3000; www.ulsterbus.co.uk) runs daily scheduled service to major cities and towns throughout the country. In Belfast, buses leave from Lagen-side Bus Centre on Donegall Quay. **BY FERRY** Ferry services into Belfast include **Norfolk Line Irish Ferries** (☎ 0870/870-1020 in Britain, or 01/819-2999 in Ireland; www.norfolkline.com), from Liverpool; and the **Isle of Man Steam Packet Company** (☎ 0162/466-1661; www.steam-packet.com) from the Isle of Man. **Stena Sealink** (☎ 08705/707070; www.stenaline.com) runs ferry service to Scotland and England.

Consulates & Embassies

U.S. Consulate, Danesfort House, 223 Stranmillis Rd. (☎ 028/9038-6104). **Canadian Consulate**, Unit 3, Ormeau Business Park, 8 Cromac Ave. (☎ 028/9127-2060).

Currency

Part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland uses the **pound sterling**, not the euro.

Currency Exchange

There are **bureau de change** desks at the Belfast and Derry airports.

Doctors & Dentists

In emergencies dial ☎ **999**. The American Embassy (see “Consulates & Embassies,” above) can provide a list of local doctors and dentists, and your hotel or B&B can offer recommendations. **DOCTORS** Call **NHS direct** (a U.K. government help line) at ☎ 0845/4647. **DENTISTS** **Dr. Martyn Chapman**, 502 Upper Newtownards Rd. (☎ 028/9065-3678); or **Dr. D.E.B Mark**, 32 Shore Rd., Holywood (☎ 028/9042-7325).

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, ambulance, or fire.

Internet Access

Revelations, 27 Shaftesbury Sq. (☎ 028/9032-0337); **Megabite Business Centre**, 77 Dublin Rd. (☎ 028/9032-2272).

Pharmacies

Outposts of **Boots the Chemist** are all over: 35-47 Donegall Place (☎ 028/9024-2332); Unit 1-3, Great Northern Mall (☎ 028/9031-0530); Unit 3, York Gate Shopping Centre (☎ 028/9074-2116); Unit 7, Kennedy Centre, Falls Road (☎ 028/9060-0604).

Police

In an emergency dial **999**. Police stations include 65 Knock Rd., Belfast (☎ 028/9065-0222).

Post Office

Bedford Street Post Office, on Bedford Street; or Queen's House Post Office, 14 Queen St.

Safety

The North now has low crime rates. Nonetheless, there are crime problems in cities, so use care to avoid pickpockets in crowded areas, and follow other basic precautions.

Taxis

You can catch a taxi at train stations, ports, airports, and the taxi stand in front of City Hall. Out in the countryside taxis are rarer—ask for numbers from your hotel or at a pub.

Telephones

The area code for all of Northern Ireland is ☎ 028. Drop the “0” when dialing from within Northern Ireland.

Toilets

Public toilets are rare. Use facilities in museums, visitor information centers, train and bus stations, and restaurants or cafes.

Visitor Information

Belfast Welcome Centre, 47 Donegall Place (☎ 028/9024-6609; www.gotobelfast.com). Open June to September Monday to Saturday 9am to 7pm, Sunday noon to 5pm; October to May Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm. **Carrickfergus Tourist Information Office**, Heritage Plaza, Antrim Street (☎ 028/9336-6455). Open year-round Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.



13

Northern Ireland





Northern Ireland in 3 Days

Vibrant and extraordinarily beautiful, the six British counties of Ulster province are all the more fascinating for their troubled history as a remnant of English rule over Ireland. Although you're entering another country here, the absence of a visible geographic or political border makes crossing a breeze. We simply fell in love with it the first time we visited, and each time we go we're amazed that it's not drawing the tourists commanded by County Kerry. This is to say: Go now, before the crowds descend.



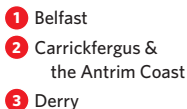
> *PREVIOUS* Emerald cliffs seen from the Torr Head Scenic Road. *ABOVE* Forty thousand tightly packed hexagonal rock columns form the Giant's Causeway.

START Belfast. **TRIP LENGTH** (including full Antrim Coast drive to the Giant's Causeway) 124 miles (199.5 km).

1 ★★ Belfast. Spend at least a day exploring the capital of Northern Ireland, which has survived long-standing political strife and painful religious divisions. Spend an hour or so on a Black Taxi Tour of the Shankill and Falls roads, where so much of the struggle occurred. Then wander the City Hall, shop in its malls and arcades, and take in a traditional music performance in one of its historic pubs. ☉1 day. See chapter 12.

Take the M2 north. Join the A2 coast road to Carrickfergus. 12 miles (19km).

2 ★★ Carrickfergus & the Antrim Coast. Spend your second day driving down the Antrim Coast road, past small, picturesque villages, castles, and natural wonders. Start early in Carrickfergus; you could stop for a look around the castle, but make it quick—you'll want all the time you can get for the Antrim Coast drive. In the summer, you can bounce carefully across the **kids Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge** (p 428). Try to time your visit so that you reach the **kids Giant's Causeway** at



Take the B147 south to Bushmills then the B17 to Coleraine. Then take the A29 and A37 southwest to Limavady and continue on the A2 to Derry. 42 miles (68km).

To return to Belfast, take the A6 southeast and continue when it becomes the M2. 71 miles (114km). To Sligo Town, take the N13 and N15 southwest. 86 miles (138km).

- There is no marked land border. You don't need a separate visa or your passport when visiting from the Republic.

- Road signs are in **miles**, not kilometers.
Signs around the border usually show both.

- The currency is the **British pound**, but euros are accepted in some border areas. ATMs are the easiest way to get pounds.

- Your mobile phone company will treat Northern Ireland as the U.K., so inform them in advance that you'll be going. They can help you save money on international roaming charges.

- Northern Ireland hotels, restaurants, and attractions almost always list zip codes ("post codes") on their websites, which are extremely useful if you have a GPS navigation system. You might want to make note of a few before you go.

In Belfast, see chapter 12; on the Antrim Coast, see p 430; in Derry, see p 436.

Northern Ireland in 1 Week

If you've got a week, you can delve beneath the surface of the North and explore its mountains and parks, take a horse ride on the beach, relax in its pubs. After spending time in Belfast, allow 2 full days to explore Counties Armagh and Antrim, followed by another 2 days along the spectacular Antrim Coast drive. From here, round off the week with a day in Derry, a handsome old city with a turbulent and colorful past.



> A mural in the Falls Road neighborhood of Belfast honors republican martyrs. Nearby, off Shankill Road, loyalist murals adorn the gables.

START Belfast. TRIP LENGTH 101 miles (162.5 km).

1 ★★★ Belfast. If you can spend a full week in Northern Ireland, the region's capital makes an excellent base for the first half of your journey. Devote 2 days to exploring the city itself, with its elegant Victorian streets. Spend an hour or so on a Black Taxi Tour of the Shankill and Falls roads—ground zero for the Troubles in the latter half of the 20th century. Then wander the City Hall and the Grand Opera House, shop in its malls and arcades, and take in a traditional music perfor-

mance in one of Belfast's exceptionally beautiful old pubs. ☹ 2 days. See chapter 12.

Take the M1 southwest. Follow signs for the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre at Craigavon. 24 miles (38km).

2 ★★ Lough Neagh & the Best of County Armagh. After a couple of days in Belfast, spend a day in County Armagh. Start with the **Lough Neagh Discovery Centre** (p 450) with its vast nature reserve and gorgeous wildflower meadows. Then head to **Navan Fort** (p 439) to explore the ancient Iron Age burial mound.



If there's time left over, you can head to **Peatlands Park** (p 450) to experience a peat bog in person—it's surprisingly beautiful. ☺ 1 day.

Take the A24 south. Turn right onto the A25 at Clough and follow signs for Castlewellsan Park. 18 miles (29km).

3 ★ Castlewellsan Forest Park & the Best of County Down. This lovely county has plenty to offer, starting with **Castlewellsan Forest Park** (p 449) and its formal walled gardens, woodland walks, arboretum, and lake stocked with trout. Later head over to the **Drumena Cashel Stone Fort** (p 449) to explore this ancient fortification that once protected the locals from Viking marauders. Finally, spend some time trekking through the **Silent Valley Mountain Park** (p 449). There are lovely views from the top of its mountains. Return to Belfast for a final night. ☺ 1 day.

Take the M2 north. Then join the M5 and A2 to Carrickfergus. 12 miles (19km).

4 ★★★ Carrickfergus & the Antrim Coast. Spend 2 days driving down the Antrim Coast road, past small, picturesque villages, castles, and natural wonders. On your first day, drive from Carrickfergus to **Whitepark Bay**, taking in **Cushendun** and the **Torr Head Scenic Road**.

Spend the night at the **Whitepark House** in Ballintoy (p 430). On the second day, you can bounce carefully across the **kids Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge**, and have a picnic on the cliffs overlooking the **kids Giant's Causeway** and **kids Dunluce Castle**. Return to Whitepark House for a second night, or press ahead to Derry. ☺ 2 days. For more on Carrickfergus see p 410; for more on the Antrim Coast see p 426.

From Ballintoy, take the A2 to Bushmills, and then leave town on the B17 southwest. Loop around Coleraine and continue on the A37 to Limavady. Rejoin the A2 to Derry. 47 miles (76km).

5 ★★ Derry. Spend your last day exploring the coveted Derry (aka Londonderry). ☺ 1 day. See p 432.

To return to Belfast, take the A6 southeast, and stay on the road when it becomes the M2. 71 miles (114km). You could also head on to Sligo Town on the N13 and N15 southwest. 86 miles (139km).

Where to Stay & Dine

In Belfast, see p 402, p 398; on the Antrim Coast, see p 430; in Derry, see p 436.

FOR PEAT'S SAKE

From Bog to Briquettes

BY KATHRYN WILLIAMS



FOR CENTURIES, peat has been one of Ireland's greatest natural resources. Bogs of peat—partially decomposed, semicarbonized vegetation—form around marshes and lakes and in places where soil is slightly acidic. Ireland has two kinds of peat bogs: raised and blanket. Raised bogs are smaller, domed, and generally found in the low-lying areas of central Ireland. Blanket bogs cover wide swaths of western Ireland with high rainfall, including hilltops and slopes such as Céide Fields (see p 345), where peat preserved the profile and some remains of a complex Stone Age farming community for 5,000 years.

The Irish have regularly harvested peat as a fuel and insulator since the 1700s,

when deforestation led locals to turn to alternative fuel sources. Traditionally, peat (also called “turf”) was hand-cut with a special spade called a *sleán* and then dried in bricks. In 1946, the Irish government established the partially state-controlled Bord na Móna (Peat Board) to mechanically harvest and market peat briquettes for home consumption and thermal power plants.

The use of peat as a fuel source waned after WWII until the 1970s, when the oil crisis and innovations in turf-harvesting machinery renewed its importance. Today, European Union scientists are studying peat's value as a relatively eco-friendly energy source, though questions remain regarding its carbon footprint.

Peat: Heat & More

FUEL When dried and compressed into briquettes, peat can be burned as fuel in homes or used to produce electricity in thermal power plants.

INSULATION In the 17th and 18th centuries, peasants used turf as a cheap building material. It is still used as insulation.

HORTICULTURE Peat is used as a potting material, a soil improver, and a compost additive.



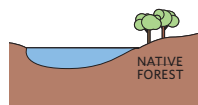
PET CARE In animal bedding and litter, peat absorbs moisture and neutralizes odors. During World War II, the British used Irish peat in Army horse stables.

FILTRATION The chemical and phar-

maceutical industries study the biofiltration properties of peat, whose fibers can clean liquids and gases of microbes and impurities.

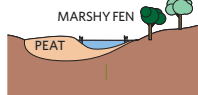
WHISKEY Whiskey distilled by peat fire acquires a smoky tang.

How Peat Bogs Form



WATER GATHERS

A flooded hollow or basin often provides a starting point for bogs.



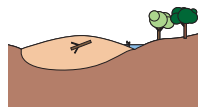
FLORA DECOMPOSE

Wet conditions and rotting vegetation over generations form peat.



FLORA RENEW

Trees grow on bog during dry periods.



CYCLE REPEATS

Vegetation is engulfed by the peat.

Ecological Concerns & Peatland Conservation

Peatlands are ecologically important for their role in the global carbon cycle. In their natural state, bogs absorb and store carbon. When great parts of a bog are exploited, this “carbon sink” is lost. Burned as fuel, peat emits carbon dioxide. To cut down on the effects of peat exploitation, scientists are studying the efficiency and benefits of burning peat mixed with other biomass, as well as reclaiming exploited peatlands as forest or wetlands.

In recent decades, a growing movement has called for the protection and preservation of Ireland's remaining natural bogs. Currently 275 peatlands are under some form of protection in Northern Ireland. The Irish Peatland Conservation Council has been campaigning to preserve peatland since 1982, and in 1987 the Republic of Ireland earmarked 50,000 hectares (about 123,500 acres) of peatland for protection.

The Antrim Coast

The most extraordinary stretch of countryside in Northern Ireland, Antrim's attractions include the awe-inspiring Giant's Causeway, the picturesque Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, and the Old Bushmills Distillery. We recommend that you start in Carrickfergus (p 410) and then drive along the A2 coastal road heading northwest. The entire journey is manageable in a long day, but we prefer to take twice as long, with a picnic basket in the trunk and a camera on our laps. It's the sort of drive you want to savor.



> *Cushendun lies at the mouth of the River Dun in the Glens of Antrim.*

START Carnlough is on the A2, 17 miles (27km) northeast of Ballymena and 35 miles (56km) north of Belfast. **TRIP LENGTH** 70 miles (112km).

1 ★ Carnlough. The coastal drive meanders for about 20 miles under bridges and stone arches, passing crescent bays, sandy beaches,

harbors, and huge rock formations, to this quiet village with a glassy harbor and a few good restaurants. If you've got the time, you can climb the white stone bridge on the waterfront and walk along a footpath for about a mile to the Cranny Falls waterfall. **On the A2 coast road.**



2 ★★ Cushendun. As you arc around the northern headlands, the road passes through the National Trust village of Cushendun, with its tea shops and perfect Cornish-style cottages. It's a good place to stop and take pictures before heading on down the coastal road again or, if you want amazing views, the Torr Head Scenic Road. On the A2 coast road.

3 ★★ Torr Head Scenic Road. This diversion is not for those with fear of heights or narrow dirt roads; nor is it a good idea in bad weather. But on a sunny, dry day, the brave can follow signs from Cushendun up a steep hill at the edge of town onto the Torr Head Scenic Road. After a precipitous climb, the road narrows further and inches its way along in rugged fashion at the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea. There are places to park along the way and take in the sweeping views—on a clear day, you can see all the way to the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland. Arguably the best views are to be had at Murlough Bay (follow the signs). Torr Head Scenic Rd. out of Cushendun.

4 ★★ Whitepark Bay (Larrybane). Near busy Ballycastle, Whitepark Bay is a wide, crystalline curve of sandy beach at the foot of rocky hills, surrounded by green farms. Nearby, the town



➤ Nine glacial valleys form the Glens of Antrim across the county's northern coast.



> Strong currents make it unsuitable for swimming, but crystalline beaches and limestone cliffs make Whitepark Bay a beautiful place to spend an afternoon.



> Fresh crab is a local specialty along the Antrim Coast.

of Ballintoy is a picture postcard waiting to happen, with its charming stone cottages and flowery gardens. On a sunny day, you might find it hard to go farther. On the A2 coast road.

5 ★★★ kids Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (Lar-rybane). This picturesque open rope bridge spans a chasm 18m (59 ft.) wide and 24m (79

ft.) deep, and soars above the sea between the mainland and a small rocky island. Local fishermen put up the bridge each spring to access the island's salmon fishery, but visitors use it for a thrilling walk and the chance to call out to each other, "Don't look down!" (By the way, that is excellent advice.) If you are acrophobic, stay clear; if you don't know whether you are, this is not the place to find out. ⌚ 1½ hr. Larrybane, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2073-1582. Free admission. Parking £5 (\$10). Apr–June and early Sept daily 10am–6pm; July–Aug 10am–8pm.

Continue on the B15 and join the A2. Then turn right onto the B147 and follow signs for the Giant's Causeway. 9 miles (14.5 km).

6 ★★★ kids Giant's Causeway (Bushmills). A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this natural rock formation is extraordinary. Sitting at the foot of steep cliffs and stretching out into the sea, it is a natural formation of thousands of tightly packed basalt columns. The tops of the columns form flat stepping stones the size of dinner plates, but the strangest thing about them is that they are almost perfectly hexagonal. They are all about .3m (12 in.) in diameter, and some are as tall as 12m (39 ft.). Scientists believe they were formed 60 or 70 million years ago by volcanic eruptions



➤ *A whiskey lover's dream, the Old Bushmills Distillery walks visitors through the whiskey-making process before letting them sample the goods.*

and cooling lava. The ancients believed they were the work of giants. **Note:** The Causeway itself is never closed—even after the visitor center shuts down, you can still walk down the path on your own. You can park free on the street rather than the Causeway parking lot. ⌚ 2–3 hr. Causeway Rd., Bushmills, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2073-1582. Free admission. Parking £5 (\$10). Visitor center daily 10am–5pm.

Take the B147 south to the A2. Turn right to Bushmills and follow signs to the Old Bushmills Distillery on Main St. 2.8 miles (4.5 km).

7 ★ Old Bushmills Distillery (Bushmills). Licensed to distill spirits in 1608, but with historical references dating from as far back as 1276, this ancient distillery is endlessly popular. Visitors can tour the working sections and watch the whiskey-making process, starting with fresh water from the adjacent River Bush and continuing through distillation, fermentation, and bottling. At the end of the tour, you can sample the wares in the Potstill Bar. ⌚ 1½ hr. Main St., Bushmills, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2073-1521. www.bushmills.com. £5 (\$10) adults, £5. Apr–Oct tours offered frequently throughout the day Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm, Sun noon–5:30pm (last tour leaves 4pm); Nov–Mar

tours offered Mon–Sat at 10:30am, 11:30am, 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30pm, Sun at 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30pm.

Turn left back off Main St. onto the A2. Stay on this road for Dunluce Castle. 2.5 miles (4 km).

8 ★ Kids Dunluce Castle (Bushmills). Between the Giant's Causeway and the bustling seaside town of Portrush, the coastline is dominated by the hulking skeletal outline of what must have once been a glorious castle. This was the main fort of the Irish MacDonnells, chiefs of Antrim. From the 14th to the 17th century, it was the largest and most sophisticated castle in the North, with a series of fortifications built on rocky outcrops extending into the sea. In 1639, part of the castle fell into the sea, taking some of the servants with it; soon after that, it was allowed to fall into a beautiful ruin. ⌚ 30 min. 87 Dunluce Rd., Bushmills, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2073-1938. Admission £2.80. (\$5.60). Apr–May and Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 2–6pm; June–Aug Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–4pm. 3½ miles/5.6km east of Portrush off A2.

Where to Stay on the Antrim Coast



> A well-appointed room at Whitepark House.

★★ Bushmills Inn BUSHMILLS

In the center of the famous whiskey-making village of the same name, this inn dates from the 17th century. Rooms in the original coaching inn have old-world charm, with country-pine furniture, floral wallpaper, and vintage prints. Rooms in the newer mill house extension have less character, but they are more spacious and modern. 9 Dunluce Rd., Bushmills. ☎ 028/2073-2339. www.bushmills-inn.com. 26 units. Double £100–£230 (\$200–\$460). MC, V.

★ Magheraboy House Hotel PORTRUSH

Nestled amid gardens at the edge of Portrush, this beautiful country-manor hotel affords panoramic views of the seacoast, sheltering guests from the town's hubbub. The traditional decor of the public rooms—dark woods, gilded mirrors, and open fireplaces—is brought down a notch in the guest rooms, which are comfortable and homey with frilly fabrics, brass fittings, and watercolors of seascapes on the walls. 41 Magheraboy Rd., Portrush. ☎ 028/7082-3507. www.magherabuoy.co.uk. 40 units. Double £100 (\$200). AE, DC, MC, V.

★ Marine Hotel BALLYCASTLE

On the harbor at Ballycastle, a 10-minute drive from the Giant's Causeway, this refurbished three-story, contemporary-style hotel is a favorite with Irish vacationers. The guest rooms have bright modern furnishings, king-size beds, plenty of amenities, and views of the sea. 1 North St., Ballycastle. ☎ 028/2076-2222. www.marinehotel.net. 55 units. Double £60–£100 (\$120–\$200). AE, DC, MC, V.

★ The Meadows CUSHENDALL

This great little guesthouse makes for an ideal base when traveling the Antrim Coast road. It's small but friendly with tasteful, modern decor and comfortable bedrooms. The views of the sea are nothing short of spectacular. 81 Coast Rd., Cushendall. ☎ 028/2177-2020. 6 units, all with shower only. Double £50 (\$100). No credit cards.

★ Sanda GLENARIFF

Perched high at the mouth of Glenariff Forest Park, Sanda affords spectacular views. The two guest rooms are modest and immaculate. The beds are very firm, and a pleasant lounge, complete with TV and a stack of books about the area, is available to guests. Host Donnell O'Loan is knowledgeable and articulate about the region. 29 Kilmore Rd., Glenariff. ☎ 028/2177-1785. 2 units, both with shower only. Double £50 (\$100). No credit cards.

★★ Whitepark House BALLINTOY

Overlooking Whitepark Bay, one of the loveliest stretches of coast in the North, this is an incredibly friendly kind of place. It's run by the sort of people who really seem to enjoy being in the hotel business—a surprisingly rare attribute—and guests are made to feel welcome and comfortable. The bedrooms are beautifully decorated, with good-size beds and firm mattresses, and all rooms have recently renovated bathrooms. This is just what you want from a small, family-run guesthouse. Ballintoy. ☎ 028/2073-1482. www.whiteparkhouse.com. 3 units. Double £95 (\$190). No credit cards. A2 coast road to Whitepark Bay.

Where to Dine on the Antrim Coast



> *The Londonderry Arms is known for its home-style Irish fare.*

★ **The Harbour Bar** PORTRUSH SEAFOOD

The menu at this cacophonous restaurant and bar leans heavily toward seafood but also offers steaks and other meat dishes. It's almost always crowded, sometimes overwhelmingly so. Still, the food is good, and the atmosphere is buzzy. 6 Harbour Rd., Portrush. ☎ 028/7082-2430. Main courses £10–£15 (\$17–\$25). AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Londonderry Arms Hotel** CARNLOUGH IRISH

This rambling old hotel in Carnlough sits right on the waterfront and is beloved for its home-style Irish food. Stews, roasts, baked chicken, and soups are all freshly made, and sold at thoroughly reasonable prices (£4–£9/\$8–\$18). That's why this rustic place in the middle of nowhere gets so crowded at lunchtime. 20 Harbour Rd., Carnlough. ☎ 028/2888-5255. Main courses £7–£14 (\$14–\$28). MC, V. Breakfast, lunch & dinner daily.

★ **M. McBride's** CUSHENDUN SEAFOOD

Opened in 1840, Mary McBride's was a famously tiny pub until it expanded to include a bistro and

restaurant. The old pub space is still intact, so squeeze in and partake of the legend. Traditional music tends to break out in the pub's conservatory, while the **Riverside Bistro** serves light lunches and dinners. The **Waterside Restaurant**, specializing in seafood, has a dinner menu (6–9pm) that features Torr Head lobster and Cushendun salmon. 2 Main St., Cushendun Village. ☎ 028/2176-1511. Main courses £6–£17 (\$12–\$34). Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **The Ramore Restaurant** PORTRUSH ASIAN

This big, modern restaurant is the main dining venue in the same complex that includes The Harbour Bar (see above). The menu is a hodgepodge of influences, from Chinese, Japanese, and Indian to traditional Irish. Dishes include Thai surf & turf (steak with lobster coconut sauce and prawn rolls), an Asian spin on lamb hot pot, and wok-fried sea bass with sweet and sour oyster sauce. 6 Harbour Rd., Portrush. ☎ 028/7082-6969. www.ramorerestaurant.com. Main courses £10–£15 (\$17–\$25). AE, MC, V. Dinner Wed–Sun.

★ **Smuggler's Inn Country House** GIANT'S

CAUSEWAY COUNTRY HOUSE Surrounded by lovely gardens and across from the entrance to the Giant's Causeway, this restaurant has wide-windowed views of the coast, which are particularly beautiful at sunset. The menu emphasizes local ingredients and creative sauces: baked salmon, grilled venison, and roast North Antrim duck with peach brandy. Bed-and-breakfast is also available for £80 (\$160) for a double. 306 Whitepark Rd., Giant's Causeway. ☎ 028/2073-1577. Reservations required. Main courses £8–£15 (\$16–\$30). MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **Sweeney's Wine Bar** PORTBALLINTRA

PUB GRUB This is a good, all-round option for when you're sick of fussy dinners. Laid-back and popular with locals, Sweeney's serves up tasty, traditional pub food—think burgers, seafood, and pasta—at reasonable prices. 6b Seaport Ave., Portballintrae. ☎ 028/2073-2405. Reservations recommended for dinner. Main courses £6–£14 (\$12–\$28). No credit cards. Lunch & dinner daily.

Derry City

Also known as Londonderry, this pretty, vibrant river city is still surrounded by 17th-century walls; you can climb the steps to the top and walk the ramparts all the way around the town center. Although they were the focus of attacks and sieges for hundreds of years, the 5-foot-thick fortifications are solid and unbroken to this day. Historians believe the town's design was modeled on the French Renaissance community Vitry-Le-François, which is similarly designed like a Roman military camp—with two main streets forming a central cross and ending in four city gates. It's made for walking, combining a medieval center with sprawling Georgian and Victorian neighborhoods.



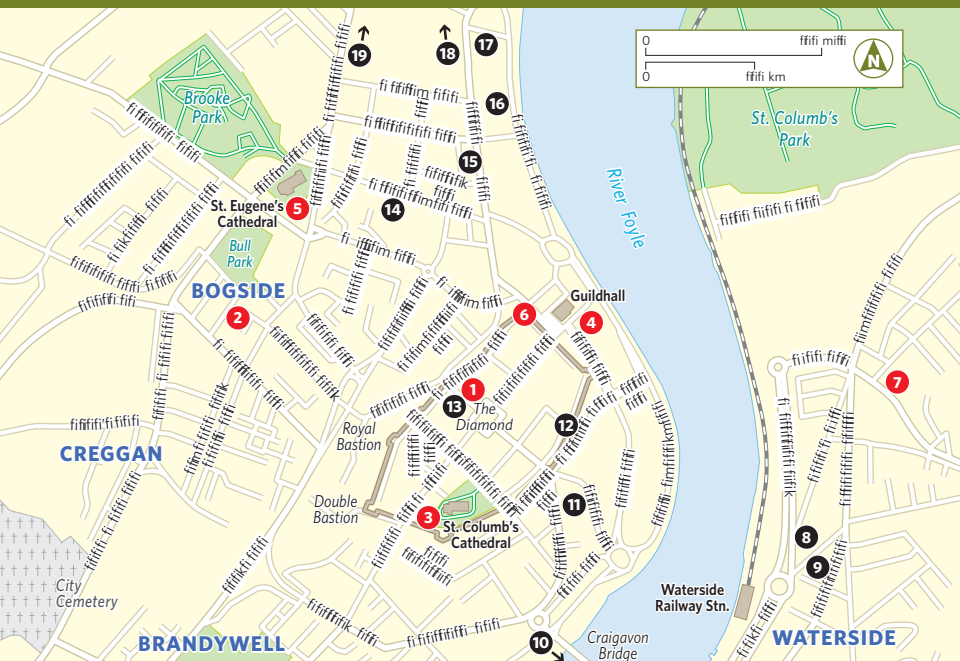
> *The best tour of Derry (aka Londonderry) is on top of the city's 17th-century stone ramparts.*

START Derry is on the A6, 71 miles (114km) northwest of Belfast, and on the N13, 82 miles (132km) northeast of Sligo Town.

1 ★★★ kids City walls. One of the best ways to explore Derry is via its old stone walls. Climb to the top and you can circle the entire walled city in about 30 minutes. Steps off of the parapets are frequent, so you'll never get stuck up there. We like to start at the Diamond, as the square in the center of the walled section is called,

and walk down Butcher Street. Then we climb the steps at Butcher's Gate, walk right toward Castle Gate, and gradually make our way around town. ⌚ 30 min. Butcher's Gate.

2 ★ The Bogside. The Bloody Sunday massacres took place in this working-class Catholic neighborhood, just outside the walled city center, in January 1972. ⌚ 2 hr. For details, see p 440.



- 1 City walls
- 2 The Bogside
- 3 Cathedral of St. Columba
- 4 Guildhall
- 5 St. Eugene's Cathedral
- 6 Tower Museum
- 7 The Workhouse Museum & Library

Where to Stay

- Beech Hill Country House Hotel 10
- City Hotel 16
- Clarence House 19
- Everglades Hotel 10
- The Saddlers House & the Merchant's House 14
- Tower Hotel 13

Where to Dine

- Badger's 12
- Brown's Bar & Brasserie 8
- Fitzroy's 11
- Mange 2 17
- O'Brien's American Steakhouse & Grill 15
- Quaywest Wine Bar & Restaurant 18
- Spice Restaurant 9

3 ★ Cathedral of St. Columba. Within the city walls, near the Bishop's Gate, this 17th-century cathedral is a prime example of the so-called "Planters Gothic" style of architecture. It has impressive stained-glass windows depicting scenes from sieges in 1688 and 1689 that held the town hostage for months. The chapter house contains a display of city relics, including the four massive original padlocks for the city gates. There's an old mortar shell on the porch—it was fired into the churchyard during one siege; in its hollow core it held proposed terms of surrender. ⌚ 1 hr. London St. ☎ 028/7126-7313. £1 (\$2) donation requested. Mar-Oct Mon-Sat 9am-5pm; Nov-Feb Mon-Sat 9am-1pm and 2-4pm.



> Painstakingly restored centuries-old cannons still line the walls of Derry.



➤ *Guildhall had to be restored after a series of sectarian bombings in the 1970s.*

4 ★ Guildhall. Just outside the city walls, between Shipquay Gate and the River Foyle, this Tudor Gothic-style building looks much like its counterpart in London. The site's original structure was built in 1890, then rebuilt after a series of sectarian bombings in 1972. It is distinguished by its huge, four-faced clock and its stained-glass windows illustrating the city's history. The hall is used as a civic center for concerts, plays, and exhibitions. Shipquay Place. ☎ 028/7137-7335. Free admission. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; Sat–Sun by appointment. Free guided tours July–Aug.

5 ★ St. Eugene's Cathedral. Designed in the Gothic Revival style, this is Derry's Catholic cathedral, in the heart of the Bogside district just beyond the city walls. The foundation was laid in 1851, but work continued until 1873. The spire was added in 1902. It's built of local sandstone, and it's known for stained-glass

windows depicting the Crucifixion by Franz Mayer & Co. of Munich. ⌚ 30 min. Francis St. Free admission. Mon–Sat 7am–9pm; Sun 7am–6:30pm.

6 ★★ Tower Museum. In O'Doherty Tower, this award-winning museum presents the history of the city from its geological formation to the present day. You can walk through time and through a series of exhibits. The museum, a must for all first-time visitors who want to understand Derry, is just inside the city walls next to Shipquay Gate and now includes a fascinating Spanish Armada museum. ⌚ 1½ hr. Union Hall Place. ☎ 028/7137-2411. Admission £4.50 adults (\$9); £2.50 (\$5) seniors, students, and kids. July–Aug Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun 2–5pm; Sept–June Tues–Sat 10am–4:30pm.



> *The Cathedral of St. Columba is a place of worship and a memorial to the city's history of siege.*

7 ★★ **The Workhouse Museum & Library.**

This splendid, compact museum on the Waterside, only minutes from central Derry, sits inside a building that was one of the much-feared 19th-century workhouses. In their day, they were notorious for disease,

misery, and death. The story told here is both grim and moving. The museum explores the plight of the poor through the famine. 🕒 1 hr. 23 Glendermott Rd., Waterside. ☎ 028/7131-8328. Free admission. Year-round Mon-Thurs and Sat 10am–4:30pm.

A Different Stroke for Different Folk

Depending on which side of the border you're on, Northern Ireland's second city is called two different things. Road signs and maps in the Republic say **Derry**; in Northern Ireland, they point to **Londonderry**. This stubborn dispute dates to the Plantation of Ulster in the 1600s, when English settlers were given land in Ireland as an attempt to entrench Protestant rule. A new city was founded by the City of London trade guilds and named Londonderry in their honor. Nationalists have always objected to the term, preferring Derry—an Anglicization of *Daire Calgaich*, the name of the much older settlement that once stood on the same site.

During the Troubles, the dispute was a cause célèbre. Many attempts have been made to change the name, including several unsuccessful court cases. Loyalists fiercely defend the name. But having a city with two

names poses a knotty problem for residents and visitors alike—what to call it? Our advice is just to be tactful. If you're drinking in a pub with a big Irish tricolor on the side, it's probably best to use Derry; but if they're flying the Union Jack, opt for Londonderry. Of the two, Derry is probably the more commonly used in town, and certainly throughout the Republic, so we've chosen to call it Derry in this book.

Fed up with effectively being forced to make a political statement whenever they talk about their own city, residents have long since tried to find an acceptable solution to the Derry/Londonderry dilemma. In the '90s, local radio DJ Gerry Anderson suggested the wry compromise "Stroke City." (American readers: Stroke is a slash in the U.K.) Quick-witted locals swiftly nicknamed the DJ "Gerry/Londongerry."

Where to Stay in Derry City



> *The antiques-filled Beech Hill Country House.*

★ Beech Hill Country House Hotel

If you have a car, this is a great option outside of town. The 18th-century house is filled with antiques and marble fireplaces, and some of the guest rooms have four-poster beds with frilly floral covers. The wooded grounds around the house are great to wander. 32 Ardmore Rd. ☎ 800/44-PRIMA (77462) in the U.S., or 028/7134-9279. www.beech-hill.com. 27 units. Double £130–£140 (\$260–\$280). AE, MC, V.

City Hotel

This new, modern hotel in the town center overlooks the waters of the River Foyle and has good-size rooms with streamlined décor in soothing neutrals. It offers all the conveniences you might hope for, including restaurants, a bar, and a leisure center with a swimming pool. Queens Quay. ☎ 028/7136-5800. 145 units. Double £85 (\$170). MC, V.

★ Clarence House

This well-kept, brick Victorian guesthouse is great for families, as it has rooms of all sizes—from twins to doubles to family rooms. Guest rooms are comfortable, and the owner, Michael Slevin, is friendly enough that he has a loyal group of regular visitors—it's a favorite of British and Irish television crews. 15 Northland Rd. ☎ 028/7126-5342. 11 units, 7 with private bathroom. Double £65 (\$130) with bathroom; £60 (\$120) with shared bathroom. MC, V.

★★ Everglades Hotel

On a hill overlooking the east bank of Lough Foyle in the prosperous Waterside district, this three-story contemporary hotel takes its name from Florida's Everglades, with the tenuous connection that, like much of Florida, the hotel is built on reclaimed waterfront land. Guest rooms are luxuriously decorated in quality contemporary furnishings and smart designer fabrics. Prehen Rd. ☎ 028/7132-1066. www.hastingshotels.com. 64 units. Double £80–£110 (\$160–\$220). AE, DC, V.

★★ The Saddlers House & the Merchant's House

These are our favorite guesthouses in Derry. Both are just a few minutes' walk from the walled city center. The Saddlers House is a rambling Victorian mansion with spacious, tastefully decorated rooms. The Merchant's House is a grand late-Georgian structure that has won conservation awards. The two also own a couple of self-catering cottages (starting at £90/\$180 per night). The owners are cheerful hosts. Saddlers House, 36 Great James St. ☎ 028/7126-9691. www.thesaddlershouse.com. 7 units, 3 with private bathroom. Double £55 (\$110) with bathroom; £50 (\$100) with shared bathroom. Merchant's House, 16 Queen St., Derry. ☎ 028/7126-4223. 5 units, 1 with private bathroom. Double £55 (\$110) with bathroom; £50 (\$100) with shared bathroom. Kids and senior discounts available. No credit cards.

★ Tower Hotel

It doesn't get much more central than this—this modern hostelry is the only hotel inside the old city walls. Its rooms are a sleek turn on the usual modern chain hotel, with well-chosen furnishings, comfortable beds, neutral linens, and quite a few bells and whistles. There's a handy Mediterranean-style bistro, as well as a cafe and bar. The Diamond, Butcher St. ☎ 028/7137-1000. www.towerhotelderry.com. 93 units. Double £70–£110 (\$140–\$220). MC, V.

Where to Dine in Derry City



> *Unassuming décor is the backdrop for innovative cooking at Brown's.*

★ **Badger's PUB GRUB**

With stained glass and wood paneling, this comfortable corner pub and restaurant is a popular meeting spot for locals who come for the friendly service, the steak-and-Guinness pie, and the hot sandwiches known as “damper melts.” 16-18 Orchard St. ☎ 028/7136-0763. Main courses £5-£10 (\$10-\$20). MC, V. Lunch Mon-Sat; dinner Tues-Sat.

★ **Brown's Bar & Brasserie FUSION**

Behind the unassuming exterior of this Waterside area row house is some of the finest food in Derry. The innovative menu blends the best of modern Irish, Italian, and Thai influences. Dishes include marinated loin of lamb on a warm noodle salad and supreme of chicken with tiger prawn-coconut sauce. Good for a splurge. 1-2 Bond's Hill, Waterside. ☎ 028/7134-5180. Main courses £10-£15 (\$20-\$30). MC, V. Lunch & dinner Tues-Fri; dinner Sat.

★ **Fitzroy's BRASSERIE**

This laid-back, brightly colored bistro is open all day and is a great option for a quick, easy meal at reasonable prices. It tends to have a buzzing crowd of regulars, and it's easy to see why. Food is a casual cultural hybrid, from chicken and bacon ciabatta sandwiches to Cajun chicken to various pastas and plenty of vegetarian options. 2-4 Bridge St. ☎ 028/7126-6211. www.fitzroysrestaurant.com. Main courses £7-£10 (\$14-\$20). MC, V. Breakfast, lunch, & dinner Mon-Sat; Lunch & dinner Sun.

★ **Mange 2 FUSION**

One of our favorite places to eat in Derry, this romantic little restaurant is a friendly, relaxed kind of place. The menu draws heavily from Continental influences; dishes on a typical night could include braised duck with warm apple chutney, mussels marinara, or cider-glazed salmon. 2 Clarendon St. ☎ 028/7136-1222. www.mange2derry.com. Main courses £11-£17 (\$22-\$34). AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner daily.

★ **O'Brien's American Steakhouse & Grill**

STEAKS We love this loud, bright, extroverted piece of Americana in central Derry. Big TVs blast music videos or sports, staff are young and cheerful, and the food is cheap and very good. Considering what you get—huge steaks served on sizzling platters with large salads and gigantic mounds of potatoes—prices are reasonable. 59 Strand Rd. ☎ 028/7136-1527. Main courses £7-£17 (\$14-\$34). AE, MC, V. Lunch & dinner Sun-Fri; dinner Sat.

★ **Quaywest Wine Bar & Restaurant INTERNATIONAL**

This is one of the trendier options in Derry—you might want to wear your high heels to this one. The mix of bar and restaurant leans more heavily toward bar as the night goes on, but the food is always excellent, and the international menu travels from Morocco to Mexico and back again. 28 Boating Club Lane. ☎ 028/7137-0977. www.quaywestrestaurant.com. Main courses £9-£15 (\$18-\$30). MC, V. Dinner daily; brunch Sun.

★ **Spice Restaurant INTERNATIONAL**

This place is always crowded with locals, even on weeknights. The vast menu features Thai, Portuguese, Caribbean, Indian, and Irish entrees, such as coconut-crusted chicken with coriander and shrimp, and seared salmon with mango and chili sauce with fresh linguine. Spencer Rd., Waterside. ☎ 028/7134-4875. Reservations recommended. Dinner main courses £10-£15 (\$20-\$30). MC, V. Lunch Tues-Fri; dinner Tues-Sun.

Politics & History in Northern Ireland

The politics of Northern Ireland has been a grisly business for a very long time. A thousand years ago, Vikings raided monasteries and plundered their wealth. A few hundred years ago, king battled king, then Oliver Cromwell came along and killed them all. In modern times, the struggle between those who would unite Ireland and those who would keep the North divided was similarly brutal. Everywhere you go in the region, you'll find another tale of historic intrigue. Here's where to find the political milestones.

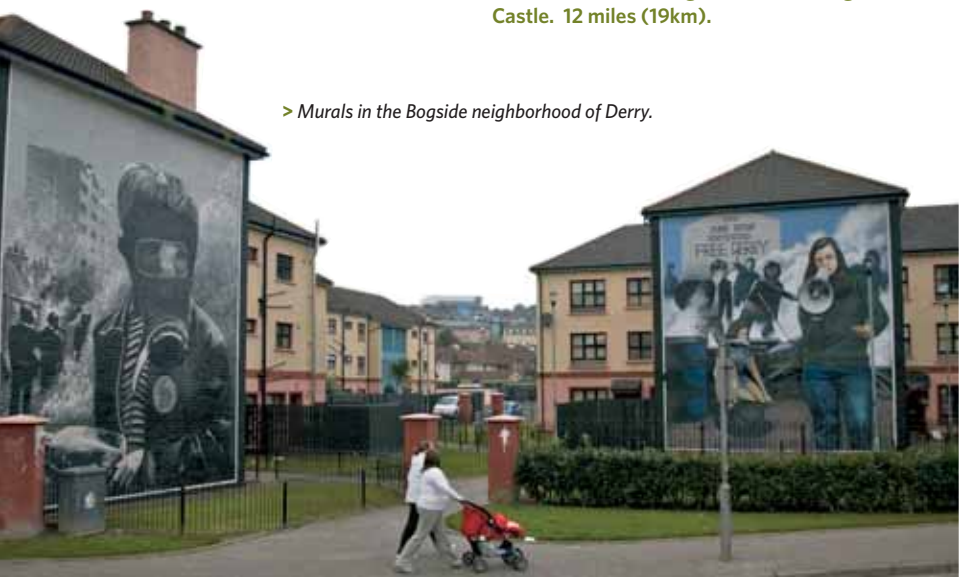
START Belfast. TRIP LENGTH 209 miles (336km).

1 Belfast. Finally clear of the tanks and the terrorists that kept many visitors at bay until the 21st century, the capital of Northern Ireland is quickly transforming from Ireland's political hotbed to its hottest destination for travelers. Start your exploration of this fascinating city with a tour of the **Falls** and **Shankill roads**, in many ways the epicenter of the so-called Troubles that dominated Northern Irish politics for 30 years until peace prevailed in the 1990s. Here you can see the most famous of the Northern Irish murals that became some of

the most instantly recognizable symbols of the conflict (p 388). Our favorite way to see this area is on a **Black Taxi Tour** (p 386), but it's quite safe to wander around; these are normal if rather poor neighborhoods, and the residents are used to visitors taking photos of the murals. A mile or so north of the Shankill Road is **Fernhill House: The People's Museum** (p 386), an absorbing overview of the history of the area told through a re-creation of a Protestant house in the 1930s. ☹️ 1 day. For more on Belfast, see chapter 12.

Take the M2 north until it becomes the M5, then the A2. Follow signs for Carrickfergus Castle. 12 miles (19km).

> Murals in the Bogside neighborhood of Derry.





2 **kids** Carrickfergus Castle (Carrickfergus).

This 11th-century castle staved off Edward the Bruce in 1315 and King John in 1210. ☉ Half-day. For details see p 410.

Return to Belfast and take the A24 south until it becomes the A2 at Clough. Follow signs for Dundrum Castle. 37 miles (60km).

3 Dundrum Castle (Dundrum). The oldest visible portions of this castle's striking and extensive ruins date from the 12th century, but they were built on the site of an even older Irish fortification. The enormous keep was built in the 13th century, as was the gatehouse. It was the home of the Maginnis family until Cromwell's army captured and destroyed it in 1652. ⌚ 1 hr. Dundrum, Co. Down. No phone. Admission £1 (\$2). Apr-Sept Tues-Sat 10am-1pm and 1:30-7pm, Sun 2-7pm; Oct-Mar Tues-Sat 10am-1pm and 1:30-4pm, Sun 2-4pm. 4 miles (6.5km) east of Newcastle, off A2.

Take the B180 west to Newry, then the A28 northwest to Armagh. Go through the town and take Kilkea Rd. west (A28). Follow signs for the Navan Centre. 42 miles (68km).

Safety Tips

Ulster is safe for travelers despite the shape-shifting political landscape, which still yields sporadic outbreaks of violence. Because of that, we recommend following these basic rules of thumb:

- Don't discuss the political situation with anyone you don't know well.
- Don't get involved in political or religious arguments.
- Don't travel deep into West Belfast.
- Consider exploring the Shankill and Falls roads with a Black Taxi guide or organized tour, rather than go it on your own.
- If you think a neighborhood looks unsafe, turn around and walk away.

4 ★ Navan Fort (Armagh). This is a very old place indeed. Navan Fort is thought to have been the most important seat of power in Ulster from 1150 B.C. until the early Christian age. A series of earthwork structures and ancient



➤ *THIS PAGE* Bloody Sunday saw 14 marchers killed at this corner in 1972. *OPPOSITE PAGE* The once mighty fortress of Dunluce Castle.

burial mounds, its purpose is still unclear to researchers, but scientists do know that it was set on fire around 95 B.C.—possibly for ritual reasons. ⌚ 1 hr. The Navan Centre, 81 Killylea Rd., Armagh, Co. Armagh. ☎ 028/3752-5550. Admission £5 (\$10) adults, £3.50 (\$7 kids). Year-round Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–5pm. 3.2km (2 miles) from Armagh on A28, signposted from Armagh center.

Return to Armagh and take the A29 north. Bypass Coleraine. Turn right onto the B17, then left onto the B62 to bypass Portrush. Turn right onto the A2 and follow signs for Dunluce Castle. 77 miles (124km).

5 ★ **kids Dunluce Castle (Bushmills).** Now just a ruin, albeit an atmospheric one, Dunluce Castle is a dramatic sight. An edifice of decaying walls and crumbling towers overlooking the ocean, it was once the biggest and best defended castle in the entire north of Ireland. It was also the main seat of the once-powerful MacDonnell clan, whose fortunes waned after they took the losing side in the Battle of the Boyne. The castle was abandoned shortly afterward. ⌚ 30 min. 87 Dunluce Rd., Bushmills, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2073-1938. Admission £2.80 (\$5.60). Apr–May and Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun 2–6pm; June–Aug Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–4pm. 3½ miles/5.6km east of Portrush off A2.

Take the A2 south to Derry.

6 ★ **Derry.** Also known as **Londonderry**—resulting from a historical disagreement (p 435) that could fill an entire book on its own—this is another Northern Irish city whose identity has been forged by generations of political and religious strife. Just outside the old city walls is the area known as the **Bogside**. Catholic residents protested regularly here in 1969, and the “Battle of the Bogside” unfolded over the course of 3 days as fires burned and rocks were hurled at local police officers. The 30,000 residents of the neighborhood declared their area as “Free Derry,” independent of British and local government. They painted murals arguing their cause on the walls of their houses and barricaded the soldiers and police out of the area. For a time, the Bogside was so dangerous for outsiders that even the military wouldn’t go there without armored vehicles. In January 1972, at a civil rights march, British troops opened fire on the marchers, killing 14, in one of the worst atrocities of the Troubles. The incident was known as “Bloody Sunday.” The **Free Derry Corner** remains near the house painted with the mural reading **YOU ARE NOW ENTERING FREE DERRY**. Nearby is a memorial to the IRA members who died in hunger strikes in the 1970s. On Rossville Street, where the Bloody Sunday shootings happened, a memorial has been erected commemorating those killed. This is also the street on which the world-famous **Bogside Artists** have painted an extraordinary series of murals chronicling the history of the Troubles. Down on the Waterside, a few minutes from central Derry, sits the **Workhouse Museum & Library** (p 435, 7). This splendid, compact museum occupies a building that was a 19th-century workhouse. Built to keep the poor from starving to death, workhouses were actually little more than concentration camps. This moving museum explains how they came about, and why. ⌚ 1 day.

To return to Belfast, take the A6 southeast until it becomes the M2. 72 miles (114km). To Sligo Town, take the N13 and N15 southwest. 86 miles (139km).

Sightseeing Tip

For an illustrated guide to the Belfast Murals and the Falls and Shankill roads, see p 388.



Northern Ireland with Kids

Carrickfergus Castle is in the same league as Blarney Castle (p 179) for that kid-friendly, ye olde medieval experience, while kids with even a passing interest in history will adore Castle Ward and the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. The Ardclinis Activity Centre is an entirely uneducational source of high-energy fun. Castle Espie and Exploris afford close encounters with the animal kingdom.



> *Thrill-seekers young and old come for rock climbing, mountain biking, windsurfing, and rafting at Ardclinis Activity Centre.*

START Belfast. TRIP LENGTH 217 miles (349 km).

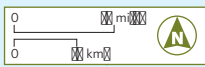
1 ★★ ★ Belfast. In a picturesque mountain park on the slopes of Cave Hill overlooking the city, **Belfast Zoo** (p 390) emphasizes conservation, education, and breeding rare species. Kids can get up close in the petting zoo and watch demonstrations of animal caretaking throughout the day. Adjacent to the zoo is **Cave Hill Country Park** (p 391), where kids can explore Neolithic caves and MacArt's Fort, an ancient earthwork built to defend the people against Vikings. There's also an adventure playground. For more high-tech, indoor fun, take them over to the **Odyssey Complex** (p 384), a hypermodern, interactive learning

environment where children can compose their own music on an air harp, create tornadoes, learn how robots are built, and try to make one of their own. There's also an IMAX cinema, video game arcades, and lots of restaurants and cafes. ☹ 1 day. For more information on Belfast, see chapter 12.

Leave Belfast on the M2 north. Then join the A2 coast road to Carrickfergus. 12 miles (19km).

2 ★ Carrickfergus Castle (Carrickfergus).

Kids tend to love this huge castle looming over the entrance to Belfast Lough—especially the life-size wax replicas of knights inside. Grown-ups may find it hokey, but it's all very impressive to small children. ☹ 1 hr. Marine Hwy.,



- 1 Belfast
- 2 Carrickfergus Castle
- 3 Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
- 4 Castle Espie
- 5 Castle Ward
- 6 Exploris
- 7 The Ardclinis Activity Centre
- 8 Carrick-A-Rede Rope Bridge
- 9 Giant's Causeway
- 10 Dunluce Centre
- 11 Amelia Earhart Centre

Antrim St., Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/9335-1273. Admission £4 (\$8) adults, £3 (\$6) seniors and kids, £11 (\$22) families. Apr–Sept Mon–Sat 10am–6pm, Sun noon–6pm; Oct–Mar Mon–Sat 10am–4pm, Sun 2–4pm. See p 410.

Backtrack along the A2 and M2. Pass Belfast and cross to the other side of Belfast Lough to Cultra, near Holywood. 17 miles (27km).

3 ★★ Ulster Folk & Transport Museum (Cultra). There's plenty for children to do on this 70-hectare (173-acre) site. They can wander through 19th-century farmhouses, mills, churches, schools, a forge, and a print shop. In the summer, they can watch as actors in period dress cook over an open hearth, plow the fields with horses, thatch roofs, and practice traditional Ulster crafts such as textile making and shoemaking. ⌚ 2 hr. See p 411.

Enter Holywood on the High St. (B198). Turn left down Church Rd. Cross the B170 and continue to the A22. Pass through the center of Comber and turn left onto Ballydrain Rd., following signs for Castle Espie. 12 miles (20km).

4 ★ Castle Espie (Comber). This marvelous wildlife center allows children to see migratory geese, ducks, and swans. Some of the birds are so accustomed to visitors that they will eat grain from their hands, so children can have the disarming experience of meeting Hooper swans eye-to-eye. Guided trails are designed for families, and the center sponsors activities and events year-round. ⌚ 2 hr. 78 Ballydrain Rd., Comber, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9187-4146. Admission £5.50 (\$11) adults, £4 (\$8) seniors and students, £2.85 (\$5.70) kids. Mar–Sept Mon–Fri 10:30am–5:30pm, Sat–Sun 11am–5:30pm; Oct–Feb Mon–Fri 11am–4pm, Sat–Sun 11am–4:30pm. 21km (13 miles) southeast of Belfast, signposted from the A22 Comber-Killyleagh-Downpatrick rd.

Rejoin the A22 south. Just before Downpatrick, take the A25 east to Strangford. Follow signs for Castle Ward. 22 miles (36km).

5 ★ Castle Ward (Strangford). This grand manor house just west of Strangford Village is a good place for the kids to get hands-on with history. Outside, they can roam its vast estate of formal gardens, woodlands, lakes, and seashore, and even ride a tractor-trailer out to see the farm animals. Inside, they can dress up



> Actors in period dress enliven the 19th-century houses and shops moved to Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

in period clothes and play with period toys.

⌚ 1 hr. Strangford, Co. Down. ☎ 028/4488-1204. www.nationaltrust.org.uk. Admission to house, gardens, and grounds £6 (\$12) adults, £3 (\$6) kids. House: Mar–June, Sept, Oct Sat, Sun 1–5pm; July, August daily 1–5pm. Grounds: Oct–Mar daily 10am–4pm, April–Sept daily 10am–8pm.

Catch a ferry from Strangford to Portaferry.

6 ★ **Exploris (Portaferry).** A cheery, kid-friendly aquarium, Exploris concentrates on sea life native to Strangford Lough and the Irish Sea. Giant aquariums teem with local sea life, and it has a wonderfully cacophonous seal sanctuary. The aquarium complex houses a cafe, gift shop, park, picnic area, children's playground, and woodlands. ⌚ 1 hr. See p 415.

Follow the A20 coast road up to Newtownards. Take the A20 to Belfast and join the M3 north. Take the M2 when the motorway splits; then turn onto the A26 up to Ballymena. Exit at junction 11, signposted for Broughstone and the A43. (The district you're going through here is called Bottom.) Continue on the A43 north for 12 miles (19 km). Turn left onto the B14 up to Cushendall. 75 miles (121km).

7 ★ **The Ardclinis Activity Centre (Cushendall).** A great place for energetic youngsters, this center runs year-round outdoor programs and courses in everything from rock climbing and mountain biking to windsurfing and rafting. Half-day, full-day, and weeklong activities for ages 8 and older are provided, as well as 5- and 6-night scenic walking and cycling tours. It's best to book at least several weeks ahead. High St., Cushendall, Co. Antrim. ☎ 028/2177-1340. www.ardclinis.com.

Leave Cushendall on the A2 northwest. At Ballycastle, take the B15 and follow signs for the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. 20 miles (33km).

8 ★★★ **Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (Larrybane).** Not for the littlest ones, this open rope bridge spans a chasm 18m (59-ft.) wide and 24m (79 ft.) above the sea. Teenagers and older kids will find the bouncy rope-walk between the mainland and a small island thrilling. If you are acrophobic, stay clear; if you don't know whether you are, don't investigate here. ⌚ 1½ hr. See p 428.



> Older kids will love to bounce across the National Trust-protected Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge.

Take the B15 and rejoin the A2 briefly, before turning onto the B147. Follow signs for the Giant's Causeway. 9 miles (15km).

9 * Giant's Causeway (Bushmills).** This UNESCO World Heritage Site will fascinate kids and adults alike, though steep cliffs make it too dangerous for families with quick-moving toddlers. Thousands of tightly packed basalt columns with flat and perfectly hexagonal tops stretch into the sea at the base of rugged cliffs. Kids can walk on the hexagons like stepping stones, climb the nearby hills, and splash in the ocean. ☉ 2–3 hr. See p 428.

Rejoin the B147 and then the A2, heading into Bushmills town center. The Dunluce Centre is on Dunluce Rd. (still the A2), a right turn off Main St. 4 miles (6.5km).

10 ★ Dunluce Centre (Bushmills). Rainy days do happen, and when they do, this is where you take the kids. This family-oriented entertainment complex will keep them busy all day with a multimedia show, "Myths & Legends," illustrating the folklore of the Antrim Coast; "Turbo Tours," a thrill ride simulating space; and "Earthquest," an interactive display

on the wonders of nature. There's also a viewing tower with panoramic views of the coast, a Victorian-style arcade of shops, and a restaurant with a children's play area.

☉ Half-day. Dunluce Rd., Bushmills, Co. Antrim.
☎ 028/7082-3333. Admission £5 (\$10).

Take the B62 and B17 to Coleraine. Bypass town on the A29; then join the A37 west. At Limavady continue west on the A2 to Derry. Before you get to the city center, turn right onto the A515, over the Madams Bank Rd. bridge. At the roundabout, turn right onto Racecourse Rd. and follow signs to the Amelia Earhart Centre and Ballyarnett Country Park. 42 miles (68km).

Setting Sail to Portaferry

The boat to Portaferry departs every half-hour 7:30am to 10:30pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 11pm Saturday, and 9:30am–10:30pm Sunday. The fare per car is £5.30 (\$11) one-way, £8.50 (\$17) return. If you're following the tour below, just buy a one-way ticket. The crossing takes about 10 minutes. The Exploris is signposted from the ferry terminal. Distance (with crossing): 3 miles (5km).





➤ **THIS PAGE** Kids can get hands-on with history at Castle Ward manor house. **OPPOSITE PAGE** The Ulster Way has recently been divided into “quality” and “link” portions.

11 ★ **Amelia Earhart Centre (Ballyarnett).**

Kids will get a kick out of this varied center just outside of Derry. A cottage on the grounds commemorates Amelia Earhart’s landing here in 1932 during her successful attempt to be the first woman to fly across the Atlantic solo. If the kids tire of that, they’ll perk up again for

the **Ballyarnett Community Farm and Wildlife Centre**, with farmyard animals and wildlife they can see and pet. 🕒 1 hr. Ballyarnett, Co. Derry.

☎ 028/7135-4040. Free admission. Cottage: Mon–Thurs 10am–4pm, Fri 10am–1pm. Farm and sanctuary: daily 10am–dusk.

Hikes & Pony Treks with Kids

One of the best ways for older kids to explore the area is to hike or ride horseback along the sea or up in the mountains. Numerous walking paths crisscross the countryside. The **Ulster Way** follows the North Antrim Coast from Glenarm to Portstewart along 90.4km (56.2 miles) of marked trail. The **Moyle Way** offers a spectacular detour from Ballycastle south to Glenariff. Maps and accommodations listings for both ways are in the free NITB booklet “The Ulster Way: Accommodation for Walkers.” The **Causeway Coast Path** takes in the full splendor of the North Antrim Coast from Bushfoot Strand to Ballintoy Harbour.

Try the **Mount Pleasant Trekking and Horse Riding Centre**, Bannostown Road, Castlewellan (☎ 028/4377-8651), which offers group trekking tours into Castlewellan Forest Park for around £11 (\$22) an hour. For riding in the Tollymore Forest Park or on local trails, con-

tact the **Mourne Trail Riding Centre**, 96 Castlewellan Rd., Newcastle (☎ 028/4372-4315). Mourne Trail maintains quality horses and conducts beach rides for highly skilled riders. The **Drumgooland House Equestrian Centre**, 29 Dunnaneen Road, Seaford, Downpatrick, County Down (☎ 028/4481-1956), also runs trail rides in the Mournes, including 2½-hour trekking around Tollymore and Castlewellan Forest parks from £30 (\$60). In Castlerock, **Hillfarm Riding and Trekking Centre** (☎ 028/7084-8629) runs treks for £15 (\$30) per hour. The **Watertop Farm Family Activity Centre**, 188 Cushendall Rd., Ballycastle (☎ 028/2076-2576; daily July–Aug; weekends late June, early Sept), runs pony treks and other outdoor activities. The **Maddybenny Riding Centre and B&B** (☎ 028/7082-3394; www.maddybenny.com) offers treks and accommodations near Portrush for £65 (\$130) a double.

Northern Ireland Outdoors

This rugged and rural region is cut out for those who like to spend lots of time in the fresh air. From wildlife centers to forest parks to ancient sites, it's got plenty to keep you busy outside. Lough Neagh has several well-planned trails and lovely wildflower meadows; meanwhile, the harsher beauty of Peatlands Park allows you to explore a real peat bog, either on foot or on a handy little railway. However, the granddaddy of all outdoor sites in the North is the Giant's Causeway—a natural wonder of the world. Don't even think about coming up here without visiting it.



> *Gortin Glen Forest Park is a good base for exploring the rugged beauty of the Sperrins.*

START Nendrum is signposted from Lisbane, just over 3 miles (4.8 km) south of Comber.

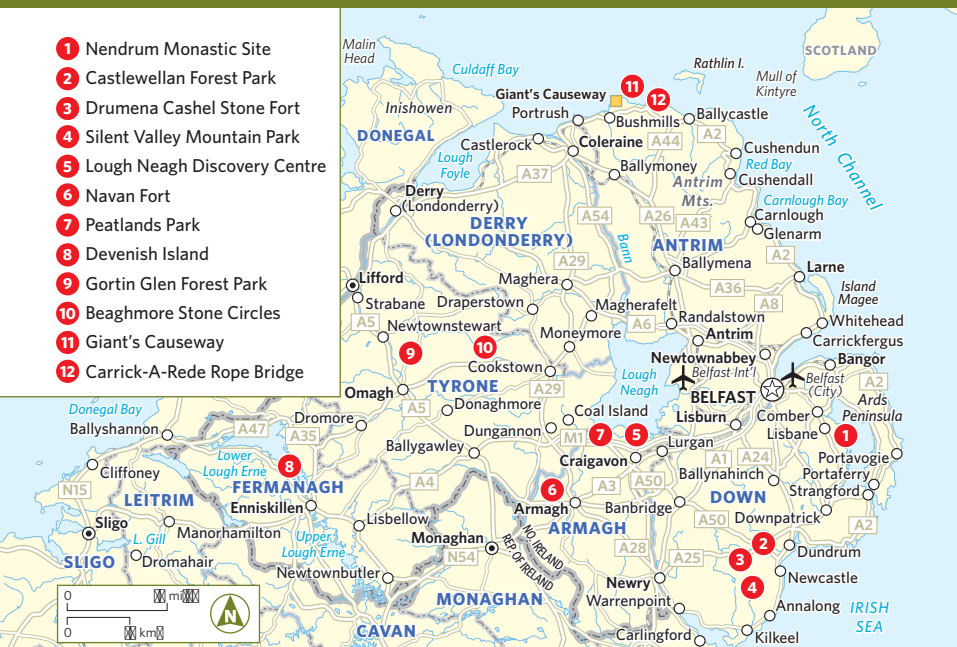
TRIP LENGTH 400 miles (644 km).

1 ★ Nendrum Monastic Site (Mahee Island).

St. Mochoai (St. Mahee) founded a monastery on this isolated island in the 5th century.

Foundations trace the outline of ancient

churches, a round tower, and beehive cells. There are concentric stone ramparts and a sundial, reconstructed from long-broken pieces. The road to Mahee Island crosses a causeway to Reagh Island and a bridge still protected by the 15th-century Mahee Castle. ⌚ 45 min. See p 414.



- 1 Nendrum Monastic Site
- 2 Castlewellan Forest Park
- 3 Drumena Cashel Stone Fort
- 4 Silent Valley Mountain Park
- 5 Lough Neagh Discovery Centre
- 6 Navan Fort
- 7 Peatlands Park
- 8 Devenish Island
- 9 Gortin Glen Forest Park
- 10 Beaghmore Stone Circles
- 11 Giant's Causeway
- 12 Carrick-A-Rede Rope Bridge

From Lisbane, take the A22 south through Downpatrick. Join the A25 (aka the A7). Take this road through Clough to Castlewellan and follow signs to the Forest Park. 16 miles (26km).

2 ★ Castlewellan Forest Park (Castlewellan). Surrounding a fine trout lake and watched over by a magnificent private castle, this forest park just begs for picnics and outdoor activities. Woodland walks, a lakeside sculpture trail, formal walled gardens, and excellent trout fishing (brown and rainbow) await. The real draw is the National Arboretum, begun in 1740 and now grown to 10 times its original size. The largest of its three greenhouses features aquatic plants and a collection of free-flying tropical birds. The Grange, Castlewellan Forest Park, Castlewellan, Co. Down. ☎ 028/4377-8664. Free admission. Parking £4.50 (\$9). Daily 10am–dusk; coffeehouse summer 10am–5pm. 6.5km (4 miles) northwest of Newcastle on A50.

Return to Castlewellan and the A25 southwest. Follow signs for Drumena Cashel Stone Fort. 2¾ miles (4.4km).

3 ★ Drumena Cashel Stone Fort (nr. Castlewellan). The walls of this irregularly shaped ancient stone-ring fort—a farmstead dating from the early Christian period—are more than 2.7m (9 ft.) thick. These people took security seriously. The *souterrain* (underground stone tunnel) is T-shaped and was likely used in ancient times for cold storage. In the extreme, it likely provided some protection from Viking raiders. ☉ 1 hr. Free admission. 1¾ miles (3km) southwest of Castlewellan, off A25, Co. Down.

Continue on the A25 for 2 miles (3.2km). Turn left onto Mill Rd. Turn right at the B180. After 1 mile (1.6km), turn left onto Kinnahalla Rd. Turn left at the B27 and follow signs from the Silent Valley Mountain Park. 14 miles (23km).

4 ★ Silent Valley Mountain Park (Silent Valley). The 22-mile-long (35km) Mourne Wall trek follows the Mourne Wall, a tall granite fence that threads together 15 mountain peaks. The steep path is more than most hikers want to take on and certainly shouldn't be attempted in a single day, but it is a fine, long walk for experienced hikers and offers wonderful views. A good alternative is the more



> *The round shape of the tower on Devenish makes it resistant to the island's strong gales.*

modest walk from the fishing port of Kilkeel to the Silent Valley and Lough Shannagh. An even less strenuous alternative is to drive to the Silent Valley Information Centre and take the shuttle bus to the top of nearby Ben Crom. The bus runs daily in July and August, weekends only in May, June, and September, and costs £2.50 (\$5) round-trip, £1 (\$2) for children. Silent Valley, Co. Down. ☎ 028/9074-6581. Admission £3 (\$6) per car. Information Centre Easter–Sept daily 10am–6:30pm; Oct–Easter daily 10am–4:30pm. 3¾ miles (6km) north of Kilkeel on Head Rd.

Take the B27 back to Hilltown. Then take the B25 north. Take the B10 north at Rathfriland and the A50 north at Banbridge. After Milltown, take the second exit on the roundabout (A26) to Lurgan. Turn left onto the A3 to Craigavon. Follow signs to Lough Neagh. 38 miles (61km).

5 ★★ Lough Neagh Discovery Centre (Craigavon). Midway between Belfast and Armagh City, this center on the southern shore of the lake at Oxford Island is a sprawling nature reserve with lush reed beds, verdant woodlands, and gorgeous wildflower meadows. The center has historical and geographic exhibits, walking trails, bird-watching observation points, and bucolic picnic areas. Oxford Island, Craigavon, Co. Armagh. ☎ 028/3832-2205. Free admission. Apr–Sept daily 10am–6pm; Oct–Mar Wed–Sun 10am–5pm.

Take the A3 southwest to Armagh. Then take the A28 and follow signs for Navan Fort. 17 miles (27km).

6 ★ Navan Fort (Armagh). Believed to have been the royal and religious capital of Ulster from 1150 B.C. until the spread of Christianity, the Navan Fort is a mysterious place. Its central circular earthwork enclosure holds a smaller circular structure, and it all encloses an Iron Age burial mound. Even today, scientists do not really know what it was used for, although they know that it was all set on fire around 95 B.C., possibly as part of a ritual. See p 439.

Backtrack to Armagh and take the A29 north. Before Dungannon, take the M1 east. Exit at junction 13 and follow signs for Peatlands Park. 21 miles (34km).

7 ★ Peatlands Park (The Birches). This big park—more than 240 hectares (593 acres)—allows you to explore peat bogs and small lakes. The whole thing is a nature reserve, so you wander through it on a well-designed system of walking paths, or you can ride through it on a narrow-gauge railway. 33 Derryhubbert Rd., The Birches, Co. Armagh. ☎ 028/3885-1102. Free admission to park. Rail ride £1 (\$2). Vehicle access to park daily 9am–dusk. Railway Easter–Aug 1–6pm. 6¾ miles/11km southeast of Dungannon, at exit 13 off M1.

Take the M1 west, which becomes the A4, to Enniskillen. Then follow signs for Devenish Island. 51 miles (82km).

8 ★★ Devenish Island. This island holds ancient monastic sites, including a perfectly intact, 12th-century round tower built to protect monks from Vikings. The island is a marvelous mélange of remnants and ruins, providing a glimpse into the lake's mystical past. While



➤ *The Beaghmore Stone Circles were unearthed from layers of peat by turf cutters in the 1940s.*

you're in the spirit, be sure to explore nearby Boa and White Islands and their extraordinary carved stone figures. 1½ miles (2.4km) downstream from Enniskillen. ☎ 028/6862-1588. Admission to round tower £2.25 (\$4.50) adults, £1.20 (\$2) seniors & kids. Ferry from Trory Point (6.5km/4 miles from Enniskillen on A32). Apr–Sept at 10am, 1pm, 3pm, and 5pm. Round-trip fare £3 (\$6) adults, £2 (\$4) kids.

Take the A32 north from Enniskillen to Omagh. Go through the town center and take the B48 north (be sure to take the branch that heads straight at the crossroads). Follow this road toward Cullion; then follow signs for the Gortin Glen Forest Park. 33 miles (53km).

9 ★★ Gortin Glen Forest Park (Cullion).

This park sprawls across hundreds of acres of gorgeous, isolated woodlands. You can drive the forest road, with its splendid views of the Sperrins, take one of the nature walks, or climb up the Ulster Way walking path, which passes through the park. Cullion, Co. Tyrone.

☎ 028/8164-8217. Free admission. Parking £3 (\$6). Daily 9am to 1 hr. before sunset. B48 (6¾ miles/11km north of Omagh).

Continue on the B48 through Gortin to Plumbridge. Turn right onto the B47. In the town center, turn right on the B46. Just outside Creggan, turn left onto the A505 to Cookstown. Follow signs for Beaghmore Stone Circles. 38 miles (61km).

10 ★ Beaghmore Stone Circles. In 1945, seven stone circles and a complex assembly of cairns and alignments were uncovered here, in remote moorland north of Evishbrack Mountain and near Davagh Forest Park on the southern edge of the Sperrins. The precise function of this intriguing concentration of Bronze Age stonework is unknown, but it may have involved astronomical observation and calculation. 11 miles (17km) northwest of Cookstown, signposted from A505 to Omagh, Co. Tyrone.

Take the B41 and the A29 northeast to Coleraine. Bypass the town on the A29 loop; then take the B17 up to Bushmills. Continue down Main St. on the A2. Turn left onto the B147 and follow signs to the Giant's Causeway. 41 miles (67km).

11 ★★★ kids Giant's Causeway (Bushmills).

You'll never see anything like these forty thou-



> Scientists believe the columns at the Giant's Causeway were formed 60 to 70 million years ago by volcanic activity.

sand hexagon-shaped basalt columns that run into the sea at the base of a steep promontory. To reach the causeway, walk from the parking area down a steep path for nearly 1.6km (1 mile), past amphitheatres of stone columns and formations with fanciful names like Honeycomb, Wishing Well, Giant's Granny, King and his Nobles, and Lover's Leap. If you wish, you can climb up a wooden staircase to Benbane Head to take in the views and walk back along the cliff top. ⌚ 2½ hr. See p 428 for more details.

Take the B147 and turn left at the A2. As the road branches right, stay on the B15 and follow signs for the Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge. 5¼ miles (8.4km).

12 ★★ Kids Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (Larrybane). Providing you're not acrophobic, it's a thrill to traverse this open rope bridge nearly 30m (100 ft.) above the sea. The 19km (12-mile) coastal cliff path from the Giant's Causeway to the rope bridge is always open and is worth the exhaustion. ⌚ 1½ hr. See p 428.

To return to Belfast, continue south on the A2, then the B147, A44, and A26 toward Belfast. Just before Antrim, go east on the M2 and continue into Belfast. 58 miles (94km). (You could also take the longer, more scenic Antrim Coast drive by staying on the A2. 72 miles/116km.)

Northern Ireland Fast Facts

Arriving

BY AIR Derry has the City of Derry Airport (☎ 028/7181-0784; www.cityofderryairport.com) with flights to Britain and elsewhere in Ireland. **BY TRAIN** Derry's train station is the Northern Ireland Railways station (☎ 028/7134-2228) on the east side of the Foyle River. Contact Northern Ireland Railways (☎ 028/9066-6630) for tickets. **BY BUS** Ulsterbus (☎ 028/9033-3000; www.ulsterbus.co.uk) runs daily scheduled service to major cities and towns throughout the country. In Derry, buses use the Foyle Street Bus Centre. **BY FERRY** See Belfast.

ATMs/Cashpoints

Withdraw cash when you're in Belfast or Derry, as cash machines are rare in the countryside. In Derry, banks cluster around Shipquay Street, near the aptly named Bank Place: Bank of Ireland, 12 Shipquay St.; and Alliance & Leicester, 17 The Diamond.

Currency

Part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland uses the **pound sterling**, not the euro.

Currency Exchange

Large banks (Bank of Ireland, Barclays, Alliance & Leicester, Ulster Bank) and big hotels will change money, and there are bureau de change desks at the Belfast and Derry airports.

Doctors & Dentists

In emergencies dial ☎ **999**. The American Embassy (see p 485) can provide a list of local dentists, and your hotel or B&B can offer recommendations. Otherwise, try Dr. Martyn Chapman, 502 Upper Newtownards Rd. (☎ 028/9065-3678), or Dr. D.E.B Mark, 32 Shore Rd., Hollywood (☎ 028/9042-7325). You can also call **NHS direct** (a U.K. government help line) at ☎ 0845/4647.

Emergencies

Dial ☎ **999** for police, ambulance, or fire emergencies.

Internet Access

In Derry, try **Bean There**, 20 The Diamond (☎ 028/7035-7777).

Pharmacies

In Derry, try **Superdrug**, 30-32 Ferryquay St. (☎ 028/7137-3669), or **Boots the Chemist**, Foyle Side Shopping Centre, Orchard Street (☎ 028/7126-0432).

Police

In an emergency dial 999. Police stations include 104 Spencer Rd., Derry (☎ 028/7136-7337).

Post Office

In Derry, the Diamond Post Office is convenient (3 Bishop St.); also the Rock Post Office, 141 Strand Rd. Most small towns will have a shop or pub that contains a post office. Look for the red post office sign.

Taxis

In Derry, there are taxi stands at the Ulsterbus station, Foyle Street, and at the train station on Duke Street. To call a cab, try **Co-Op Taxis** (☎ 028/7137-1666) or **Foyle Taxis** (☎ 028/7126-3905).

Telephones

The area code for all of Northern Ireland is 028. Drop the "0" when dialing from within Northern Ireland.

Toilets

Public toilets are rare. Use facilities in museums, visitor information centers, train and bus stations, and restaurants or cafes.

Visitor Information

In County Armagh, there are information centers at **Narrow Gauge Road**, Larne (☎ 028/2826-0088); **7 Mary St.**, Ballycastle (☎ 028/2076-2024); **Giant's Causeway**, 44 Causeway Rd. (☎ 028/2073-1855); and the **Dunluce Centre**, Sandhill Drive, Portrush (☎ 028/7082-3333). In County Down, there's the **Newcastle Information Centre**, 10-14 Central Promenade, Newcastle (☎ 028/4372-2222). The **Derry Tourist Information Centre** is at 44 Foyle St. (☎ 028/7126-7284; www.derryvisitor.com).

Tip

See p 417, "Belfast Fast Facts," for additional information.



14
**Irish
History &
Culture**

A Brief History of Ireland



> **PREVIOUS PAGE** Cottages in County Donegal. **ABOVE** King Henry II at Leinster, 1170.

Invasion

Ireland's earliest settlers were middle Stone Age Mesolithic tribes, who arrived around 8000 B.C. via wooden boats and temporary land bridges from Scotland; then Neolithic farmers from Britain; then the Celts. Christianity first arrived in the 5th century A.D., heralding a golden age of monastic learning and culture that lasted hundreds of years, only to be torn down by the Vikings. But no invader did quite so much to shape the history of these shores as the

English, who first laid claim to Irish land in 1170. Actually, it wasn't, strictly speaking, an invasion—at least, not at first. English troops first arrived at the behest of Diarmait Mac Murchada, the King of Leinster, who had asked for military aid in his campaign to become High King of Ireland. In return, he offered the English king, Henry II, overlordship of Leinster. What Diarmait did not realize, of course, was that his newfound friends would never leave.



> Cromwell in Ireland, 1649.

Conquest

The next few hundred years were marked by a series of wars and skirmishes, as the English gradually strengthened their hold over Ireland. Nearly 500 years after that first, fateful incursion, came a man who is still, perhaps, the most controversial figure in the history of Anglo-Irish relations: Oliver Cromwell. After fierce uprisings in Ulster and Leinster, by 1642 most of Ireland was again under Irish control. Unfortunately for the rebels, they had supported the losing Royalist side in the English Civil War. Cromwell, who had led the victorious Parliamentary faction, was paranoid that Ireland could be used to mount a counterinsurgency, possibly with the help of the French. And so it was that as the hot, sticky summer of 1649 drew to a close, Cromwell set sail for Dublin, bringing an army of 12,000 men, and a battle plan so ruthless that, to paraphrase another dark chapter in the



> *The United Irishmen, 1798.*

history of warfare, it would live forever in infamy. Thousands died over the coming months, as Cromwell's troops cut a bloody swath through the Irish countryside. In the town of Drogheda alone, Cromwell's armies slaughtered more than 3,550 people in a single night. After a 7-month rampage, Cromwell finally left Ireland and its shattered administration in the care of his lieutenants and returned to England. A decade later, Cromwell himself died, the fledgling English Republic collapsed, and the monarchy was restored. But England's control over her brutalized neighbor showed no sign of abating.

Rebellion

The next hundred years saw relative calm in Ireland, though the peace was an unhappy one. The British government granted Protestant landowners full political power and enacted laws that effectively immobilized the Catholic



> *Starving peasants during the Great Famine.*

population. Being a Catholic in late-17th-century Ireland was not exactly illegal per se, but in practice life was all but impossible for those who refused to convert. In 1798, full-scale insurrection led by Wolfe Tone's Society of United Irishmen spread across much of the country. The rebels briefly declared a tiny republic in the southwestern counties of Kilkenny and Wexford in June, but loyalist forces crushed the uprising and then went on a murderous spree, killing tens of thousands of men, women, and children, and burning

entire towns to the ground. As a final indignity, the British tricked the Irish Parliament into dissolving itself, and Ireland reverted to strict British rule—setting the stage for the most tragic episode of Irish history, the Potato Famine.

The Great Famine

See p 324.

Independence at Last

On Easter Monday 1916, a group of nationalists occupied the General Post Office in the heart of Dublin, from which they proclaimed the founda-



> *President de Valera, 1959.*

tion of an Irish Republic. Inside were 1,500 fighters, led by the schoolteacher and Gaelic League member Patrick Pearse and Socialist leader James Connolly. The British, nervous at an armed uprising on its doorstep while it fought a massive war in Europe, responded with overwhelming force. A battle raged in the streets of Dublin for 6 days before the leaders of the rebellion were captured and imprisoned. Most were speedily executed.

Over the next couple of years, tensions escalated into violence once again. After sporadic fighting, a truce was eventually declared on July 9, 1921, and 6 months later, the Anglo-Irish treaty was signed in London, granting legislative independence to 26 Irish counties (known together as the Irish Free State). The compromise was that six (mainly Protestant) counties in the north would remain part of the United Kingdom. Na-



> *Sunday, Bloody Sunday, 1972.*

tionalists were split between those, led by Michael Collins, who accepted the treaty as a platform on which to build, and those, led by Eamon de Valera, who would accept nothing less than immediate and full independence at any cost. In June 1922, this spilled over into a short but bloody civil war, which ended with the defeat of the antitreaty forces 8 months later. De Valera eventually became Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and later President, although it was to be another political rival, Douglas Hyde, who finally oversaw Ireland's transition to full republic in 1948.

Stuck in Neutral

One of Eamon de Valera's more controversial decisions while he was in office was to stay out of World War II, despite the best efforts of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt to persuade him otherwise. The basis for his decision was that Ireland was economically weak, but it left Ireland in the peculiar position of tacitly favoring one side in

the war, but refusing to help them. His reticence didn't find much favor among the Irish population, either, and as many as 300,000 Irish men found ways to enlist in the British or U.S. armies. In the end, more than 50,000 Irish soldiers died in the war their country never joined.

The Troubles

After the war, 2 decades passed without violence in Ireland, until the late 1960s once more saw the outbreak of sectarian conflict between Protestant Loyalists and Catholic Republicans in Northern Ireland. It would be a terrible oversimplification to say that the Troubles were merely a clear-cut struggle between those who wanted to complete the process of Irish unification and those who wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom, although that was, of course, the crux of the conflict. Factors such as organized crime and terrorism, together with centuries-old conflicts over religious, land, and social issues, make the



> Free Derry mural today.

conflict even harder for outsiders to understand.

The worst of the Troubles came in the 1970s. In 1972, British troops opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in Derry, killing 12 people. The nationalist IRA (Irish Republican Army) took advantage of the mood of public outrage to begin a civilian bombing campaign on the British mainland. The cycle of violence continued for 20 years, until finally, secret talks led to an IRA cease-fire in 1994. (The cease-fire held only shakily—an IRA bomb in Omagh 4 years later killed 29, the most to die in any single incident of the Troubles.)

The peace process continued throughout the 1990s, helped significantly by the mediation efforts of U.S. President Bill Clinton, who arguably became more involved in Irish affairs than any American president before him, as leader of the nation with the most Irish emigrés. Eventually, on Good Friday 1998, a peace accord was finally signed in Belfast. The agreement com-



> Bono promotes the Good Friday talks, 1998.

mitted all sides to a peaceful resolution and included the reinstatement of full self-government for the region. It stopped short of resolving the territorial issue once and for all—in other words, Northern Ireland is still part of the U.K., and will be for the foreseeable future—but ensured that the battle would now be fought with the ballot box, rather than the gun. In 2005, the IRA fully decommissioned its weapons and officially dissolved itself as a paramilitary unit.

Rebirth

While Northern Ireland is only now recovering from years of conflict, the Republic of Ireland has flourished in recent decades. The 1990s brought unprecedented wealth and prosperity, thanks in part to European Union subsidies, and partly to a thriving high-

tech driven economy, which acquired the nickname “The Celtic Tiger” for its new global strength. Ireland did not escape the financial turmoil that hit world markets in the summer of 2008, however, and the country is now in the grip of both a housing crash and a recession.

Ireland has become much more socially liberal in recent decades. The transformation is marked, although Ireland is still a long way behind much of the Western world in its attitudes toward divorce, homosexuality, and women’s reproductive rights.

And so it is that Ireland in the early-21st century faces up to the latest battle in its long, long history: a democratic battle with itself to decide just what kind of a country it wants to be.

A Timeline of Irish History



B.C.

- c. 8000 B.C.** Earliest known human settlers arrive in Ireland.
- 2000 B.C.** First metalworkers come to Ireland.
- c. 700 B.C.** Celtic settlement of Ireland begins.
- c. A.D. 100** The Gaels arrive in Ireland, naming one of their biggest settlements “Dubhlinn.”
- A.D. 432** Traditional date of St. Patrick’s return to Ireland as a Christian missionary.



500 B.C.

- 500–800** Ireland becomes one of the largest centers of Christianity in Europe—often referred to as the “golden age.”
- 795** First Viking invasion.
- 841** Vikings build a sea fort in the area of modern-day Dublin.
- 853** Danes take possession of the Norse settlement.
- 1014** Battle of Clontarf. High King of Ireland, Brian Boru, defeats the Vikings.
- 1167–71** Forces of English King Henry II seize Dublin & surrounding areas.
- 1204** Dublin Castle becomes center of English power.
- 1297** First parliamentary sessions in Dublin.
- 1300s** First great plague kills a third of the population of Dublin.



1500

- 1500s** English rule consolidated across Ireland. Henry VIII proclaims himself king of Ireland.
- 1534–52** Henry VIII begins suppression of Catholic Church in Ireland.
- 1558–1603** Reign of Elizabeth I (left). Ireland proclaimed an Anglican country. The “plantation” of Munster divides Ireland into counties.
- 1591** Trinity College founded.
- 1593** Pirate Queen Grace O’Malley meets with Elizabeth I to request restoration of her land and release of her brother and son from British captivity; they are released but her land remains under crown rule.
- LATE 1500s** Irish Chieftain Shane O’Neill and his nephew Hugh launch revolts against English rule, quashed by Elizabeth I in 1603.



1600

1607 The flight of the Irish earls, marking the demise of the old Gaelic order.

1641 Irish Catholic revolt in Ulster led by Sir Phelim O'Neill ends in defeat.

1649 Oliver Cromwell (left) invades and begins the reconquest of Ireland.

1690 The forces of King James II, a Catholic, are defeated at the Battle of the Boyne by William of Orange, consolidating Protestant order in England and leading to the formation, in 1795, of the Orange Order.

1691 Patrick Sarsfield surrenders Limerick. He and some 14,000 Irish troops, the "Wild Geese," flee to the Continent.



1700

1704 Enactment of first Penal Laws. Apartheid comes to Ireland.

1778 The Penal Laws are progressively repealed.

1782 The Irish Parliament is granted independence.

1791 Wolfe Tone (left) founds the Society of the United Irishmen. Five years later he launches an invasion from France, fails, is taken captive, and commits suicide.

1798 A French invasion force is defeated at Killala Bay. General Humbert surrenders to Cornwallis.



1800

1801 The Irish Parliament is induced to dissolve itself. Ireland becomes part of the United Kingdom.

1803 Twenty-five-year-old Robert Emmet is hanged after his uprising of fewer than 100 men is a tragic failure.

1829 Daniel O'Connell secures passage of the Catholic Emancipation Act. He is later named lord mayor of Dublin.

1845 The Great Famine. An estimated two million Irish either die or emigrate, mostly to the U.S.

1848 The revolt of the Young Irelanders ends in failure.

1858 The Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret society known as the Fenians, is founded in New York.

1866 In an imaginative publicity stunt, a minuscule army of Fenians attempts to invade Canada.

1879 Michael Davitt founds the National Land League to support the claims of tenant farmers.

1879-82 The "land war" forces the enactment of reform. The tenant system unravels; land returns to those who work it.

1886 & 1894 Bills for home rule are defeated in Parliament.

1893 The Gaelic League is founded to revive the Irish language.



1900

1904 The Abbey Theatre opens in Dublin.

1905–08 Founding of Sinn Féin (“We Ourselves”) with close links to the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

1912 Third home rule bill passes in the House of Commons and is defeated by the House of Lords.

1916 Patrick Pearse and James Connolly lead an armed uprising on Easter Monday to proclaim the Irish Republic. Defeat is followed by the execution of 15 leaders of the revolt.

1918 Sinn Féin wins a landslide election against the Irish Parliamentary Party.

1919 Sinn Féin, led by Eamon de Valera, constitutes itself as the First Irish Dáil and declares independence.

1919–21 The Irish War of Independence. Michael Collins (left) commands the Irish forces.

1921 Anglo-Irish treaty. Ireland is partitioned: Twenty-six counties form the Free State; the other six remain a part of the U.K. The Free State adopts its first constitution a year later.

1922–23 The Irish civil war, between the government of the Free State and those who opposed the Anglo-Irish treaty. Michael Collins is assassinated by the IRA, who saw the treaty as a sellout.



1930

1932 Eamon de Valera (left) leads Fianna Fáil to victory and becomes head of government.

1937 The Free State adopts a new constitution, abandons membership of the British Commonwealth, and changes the country's official name to Éire.

1939 Dublin is bombed by Germany at the start of World War II, but Ireland remains neutral.

1948 The Republic of Ireland Act. Ireland severs its last constitutional links with Britain.

1955 Ireland is admitted into the United Nations.



1960

1963 U.S. President John F. Kennedy, the first Catholic Irish-American U.S. president, visits Dublin.

1969 Violence breaks out in Northern Ireland. British troops are called in.

1972 In Derry a peaceful rally turns into “Bloody Sunday.” The Northern Irish Parliament is dissolved and direct rule imposed from Britain.

1973 Ireland joins the European Community.

1986 The Anglo-Irish Agreement gives the Republic a say in the government of Northern Ireland.



1990

1990 Mary Robinson (left) is elected Ireland's first female president.

1994 The IRA announces a cease-fire, and the Protestant paramilitaries follow suit. Commencement of peace talks.

1995 The British and Irish governments issue "A New Framework for Agreement," and U.S. President Bill Clinton makes a historic visit to Ireland, speaking to large crowds in Belfast and Derry. He is received with enthusiasm in the Republic.

1996 The IRA breaks its cease-fire. An IRA bomb in Omagh kills 29. The North sees the worst rioting in 15 years.

1997 The IRA declares a new cease-fire. Sinn Féin enters inclusive all-party peace talks designed to bring about a comprehensive settlement.

1998 The all-party peace talks conclude with the so-called "Good Friday Agreement." John Hume and David Trimble are awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.



2000

2000 The IRA issues a statement saying it will decommission its arms. In May, power is restored to the institutions established by the Good Friday Agreement.

2001 David Trimble (left) threatens to resign as Ulster Unionist party leader if the IRA does not decommission as promised. The IRA doesn't; Trimble resigns in June. Following a surge of feeling in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., IRA decommissioning begins.

2002 The peace process continues amid sectarian violence on both sides.

2004 Irish government passes smoking ban in all public indoor spaces.

2005 David Trimble loses his parliamentary seat, but hard-line parties Sinn Féin and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) do very well. The IRA decommissioning process is officially declared complete, and the IRA disbands as a paramilitary unit.

2006 Peace holds, but the North has rarely been more polarized. The Gaeltacht movement spreads, and larger regions of the country are declared, in essence, Gaelic-language-only.

2007 A power-sharing executive is put into place in Northern Ireland, bringing together lifelong enemies, DUP leader Ian Paisley and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.

2009 In March, IRA dissidents kill two British soldiers and injure others outside a British army base in Antrim. It is the first deadly attack on the British military in Northern Ireland since 1997, when an IRA gunman killed a soldier.

Ireland in High & Popular Culture



> Oscar Wilde, 1854–1900.

Literature

For more than 100 years, Ireland has had a place in literature disproportionate to its small size and modest population. Four writers from this tiny country have won the Nobel prize for literature. Inspired by the country's unique beauty, the unfairness they perceived in its political system, and its cruel legacy of poverty and struggle, the country's authors, poets, and playwrights wrote about the Irish for the Irish, and to raise awareness in the rest of the world. No matter where you live, you've probably been reading about Ireland all your life.

One of the country's best-known early writers was satirist **Jonathan Swift**, who was born in Dublin in 1667. Educated at Trinity College, he left Ireland for England in 1688 to avoid the Glorious Revolution. He spent much of his adult life in London, returning to Ireland when he was over 50 years old, at

which point he began to write his most famous works. The suffering of the poor in Ireland greatly affected him, but he translated his anger into dark, vicious humor. His tract *A Modest Proposal* is widely credited with inventing satire as we now know it. His best-known works have political undertones—even *Gulliver's Travels* is a political allegory.

Best known for his book *Dracula*, the novelist and theater promoter **Bram Stoker** was born in Clontarf, a coastal suburb of Dublin, in 1847. As a young man fresh out of Trinity College, he began reviewing theater productions for local newspapers, which is how he met the actor Henry Irving. He spent much of his time promoting and working for Irving and wrote novels on the side for extra money. He spent most of his life in England, which largely inspired his work, although it is said that St. Michan's Church in Dublin, with its ghostly crypt, and St. Mary's in Killarney

helped to contribute to *Dracula*'s creepy feel.

Born in Dublin in 1854, **Oscar Wilde** was a popular and successful student at Trinity College, winning a scholarship to continue his studies in England at Oxford. After a flamboyant time there, he graduated with top honors and returned to Ireland, only to lose his girlfriend to Bram Stoker in 1878, after which he left Ireland forever. His writing—including the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, plays including *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and books of poetry—were forever overshadowed by his personal life. While there is a statue of him in Dublin, his works were largely inspired by British and French writers, and he spent the majority of his life abroad.

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856 and attended school in the city, but never went to college, as he came to loathe the organized education system. His literary style was, therefore, self-taught, and he spent his life studying and writing. He moved to England as a young man and lived much of his life in a village in Hertfordshire in England. As a result, many of his works have a distinctly English feel. His plays are known both for their sharp wit and for their sense of outrage over unfairness in society and the absurdity of the British class system. He is the only person ever to have won both the Nobel prize and an Oscar (for *Pygmalion*).

William Butler Yeats was born in Sandy Mount outside Dublin in 1865, and attended the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin, but his poetry and prose were heavily inspired by County Sligo, where he spent much of his time, and where he is buried. One of the leading figures of the Irish literary revival in the early 20th century, he won the Nobel prize in 1923.

James Joyce was born in the Dublin suburb of Rathgar in 1882 and educated at Jesuit boarding schools, and later at Trinity College. He wrote vividly—and sometimes impenetrably—about Dublin, despite spending much of his life as an expat living nomadically in Europe. His controversial and hugely complex novels *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* are his most celebrated (and least understood) works. They and his collection of short stories, *Dubliners*, are seen as touching deeply on the character of the people of Dublin.

The poet and playwright **Samuel Beckett** was born in 1906 in the Dublin suburb of Foxrock and educated at Trinity College. His work, however, was heavily influenced by German and French postmodernists, and he spent much of his life abroad, even serving with the Resistance in France during World War II. Best known for his complex absurdist play *Waiting for Godot*, he won the Nobel prize in 1969.

The controversial writer, erstwhile terrorist, and all-



> *Frank McCourt, 1930–2009.*

around bon vivant **Brendan Behan** was born in Dublin in 1923. His father fought in the Easter Rising and read revolutionary literature to his children as bedtime stories. His mother was a close friend of Michael Collins. When he was 14, Behan joined Fianna Éireann, the youth organization of the IRA. A terrible terrorist, he was arrested on his first solo mission to blow up England's Liverpool docks when he was 16 years old. His autobiographical book, *Borstal Boy*, describes this period in his life in exquisite detail. His play *The Quare Fellow* made him an international literary star, and he would spend the rest of his life as a jolly, hopeless alcoholic, drinking his way through London, Dublin, and New York, better known for his quick wit and bons mots than for his plays.

Among modern Irish writers, the best known is arguably the poet **Seamus**

Heaney. He was born in 1939 near a small town called Castledawson in Northern Ireland, where as a child he won scholarships to boarding school in Derry and later to Queen's University in Belfast. His years studying classic ancient Greek and Latin literature and Anglo-Saxon writing heavily influenced his poetry, but all of his writing is marked by his life in the troubled region where he grew up, and where he still lives. His works, including *The Cure at Troy* (based on the works of Sophocles), *The Haw Lantern*, and *The Government of the Tongue*, ultimately earned him the Nobel prize in 1995.

Other Irish writers now burning up the book charts include **Maeve Binchy** (*Dublin 4*); **J. P. Donleavy** (whose book *The Ginger Man*, about a drunken Trinity College student, was banned by the Catholic church); **Roddy Doyle** (whose book *The*



> A scene from Robert Flaherty's *Man of Aran*, 1934.

Commitments, about aspiring Irish musicians, became a top-grossing film); and **Jennifer Johnston**, who addressed the tension between Protestants and Catholics in *How Many Miles to Babylon?*

Others to read include **Edna O'Brien** (*The Country Girls*), for bawdy laughs; **Flann O'Brien** (*At Swim-Two-Birds*), for hilarious writing about writing; and *The Informer*, a tense thriller by **Liam O'Flaherty**.

Nonfiction

Nonfiction works about Ireland are less well known than the

country's fiction, but if you want to know about Ireland and the Irish, there are plenty of talented writers in and out of the country who are willing to tell you.

The author **Tim Pat Coogan** is the son of an IRA volunteer, and he has written two excellent books, *The Irish Civil War* (2001) and *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966–1996* (1997), both of which are essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the complexities of 21st-century Ireland. He also wrote a controversial biography, *Eamon*

de Valera, criticizing the former Irish president's actions and legacy.

To understand more about the famine, try the British author **Cecil Woodham-Smith's** *The Great Hunger*. Written in 1962, it's still viewed as the definitive, dispassionate examination of this dark period in Irish history.

For a look at Ireland in recent history, try the British writer **John Ardagh's** *Ireland and the Irish* (1995) or **F. S. Lyons's** *Ireland Since the Famine* (1973).

The late Dublin-born



> Michael Collins, 1996.

journalist **Nuala O'Faolain** wrote two top-selling memoirs, *Are you Somebody?* and *Almost There*, which give the reader an insider's view of living and growing up in modern Ireland.

The late Irish-born American writer **Frank McCourt** earned acclaim and won the Pulitzer Prize for *Angela's Ashes* (1996), his grim memoir of a childhood spent partly in Limerick and partly in Brooklyn. But it has been bitterly disputed by many in Limerick who claim it is not an accurate representation of the city during that time, and the book is very controversial in Ireland.

Film

Many controversial, complex, and difficult Irish subjects have been tackled by an International array of directors and actors.

Man of Aran (directed by Robert Flaherty, 1934) is a "docufiction" about life on the

Aran Islands. Long respected as a documentary, it's now known that much of it was staged by its American director. Still, it's an interesting look at what the islands looked like in the early-20th century.

Maeve (directed by John Davis/Pat Murphy, 1982) is widely viewed as one of Ireland's first independent films. Starring the American actress Mary Jackson, it follows an Irish expat in England who decides to return to strife-torn Northern Ireland.

The Commitments (directed by Alan Parker, 1991) may be the most famous Irish musical ever made. With its cast of young, largely inexperienced Irish actors playing musicians dedicated to American soul music, it's a delightful piece of filmmaking.

In the Name of the Father (directed by Jim Sheridan, 1993) tells the story of the "Guildford 4"—four Irish people falsely accused of an IRA bombing in the town of Guildford in England. British actors Daniel Day-Lewis and Pete Postlethwaite do admirable accents.

Some Mother's Son (directed by Terry George, 1996) was co-written by Jim Sheridan, and tells the story of hunger striking IRA prisoners in Maze Prison in the 1970s. It stars the Northern Irish actor John Lynch and the Dublin-born actress Fionnula Flanagan.

Michael Collins (directed by Neil Jordan, 1996) is a fine biopic about the Irish rebel, filmed largely on location and starring the Irish actor Liam Neeson.



> Once, 2007.

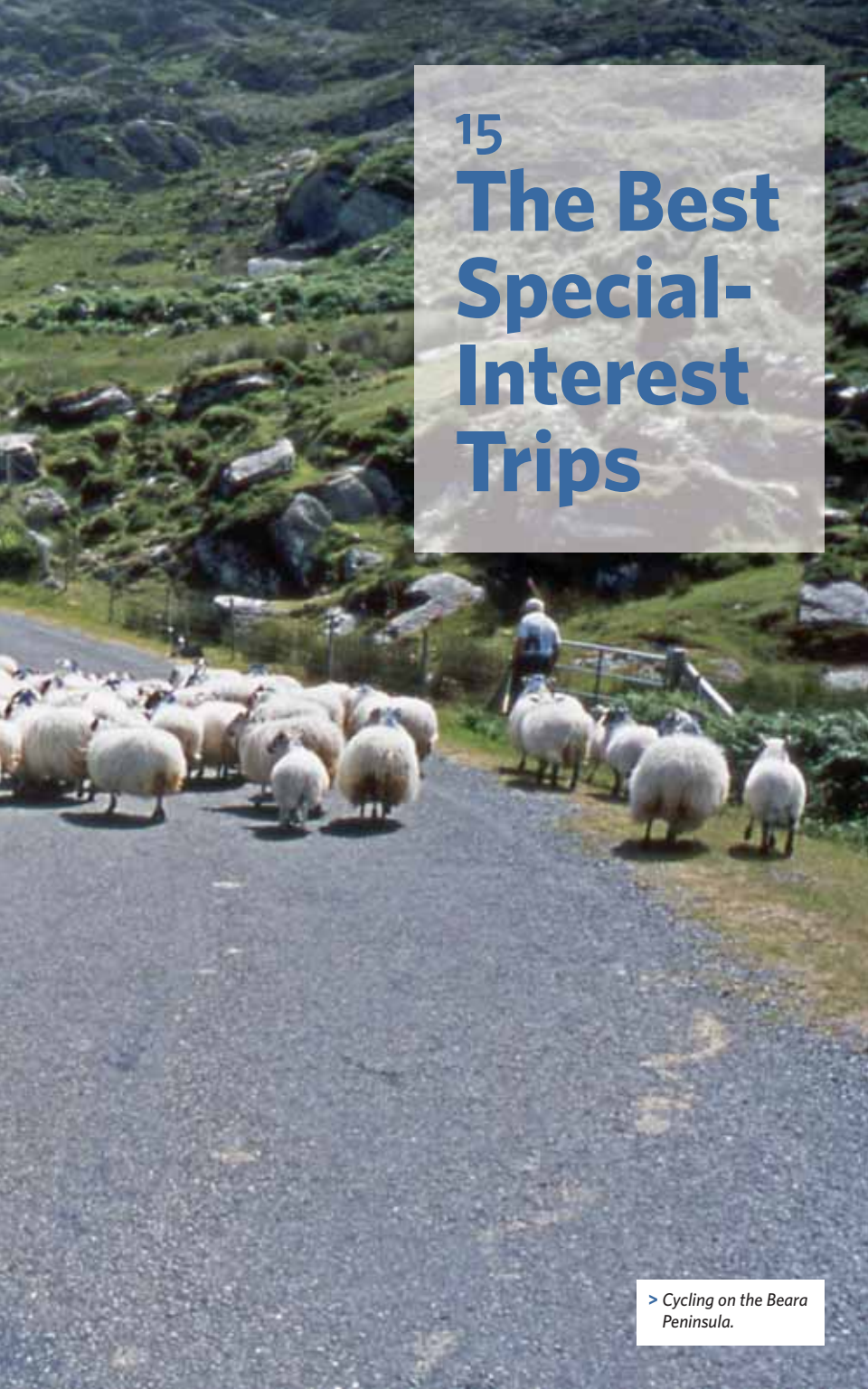
Veronica Guerin (directed by Joel Schumacher, 2003) is a dark, fact-based film (with the Australian actress Cate Blanchett doing an excellent Irish accent) about a troubled Irish investigative reporter on the trail of a drug boss.

Intermission (directed by Jim Crowley, 2003) is a lively urban romance filmed on location in Dublin, featuring the Irish actor Colin Farrell (talking in his real accent for a change). A great look at Dublin right in the middle of its economic boom.

The Wind That Shakes the Barley (directed by Ken Loach, 2006), with a mostly Irish cast and English director, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes for its depiction of Ireland's early 20th-century fight for independence.

Once (directed by John Carney, 2007) is a touching, Oscar-nominated portrait of two struggling young musicians—an Irish singer (played by the Irish actor Glen Hansard) and a Czech piano player trying to make it big in Dublin.



A photograph of a flock of sheep on a paved road in a rural landscape. The sheep are white and fluffy, some facing the camera and others facing away. A person is visible in the background, possibly herding the sheep. The background features green hills and rocky terrain.

15 The Best Special- Interest Trips

> *Cycling on the Beara Peninsula.*

Organized Tours

There seems to be a limitless array of organized tours in Ireland, from Ghost Tours of Dublin, to trips to the Aran Islands from Galway, to horseback rides through the Burren. In the preceding chapters, we've listed a few of our favorites for each particular region. The best of the best are noted here.

The national bus company, **Bus Éireann** (☎ 091/562000; www.buseireann.ie), runs a good range of tours throughout Ireland. You can tour Dublin and then visit Glendalough or Newgrange by bus, or travel by boat to Waterford. Bus Éireann also runs good tours of Galway, taking in the Maam Cross, Recess, Roundstone, and Clifden. Day tours start at around €22.

A number of smaller tour companies are run by locals who lead excellent excursions to various regions. For touring the Wicklow Mountains and Glendalough, try **Aran Tours** (☎ 01/280-1899; www.discoverdublin.ie), which offers an itinerary it has dubbed the "Wild Wicklow Tour." *Wild* might be too strong a word, but it is certainly lively and enjoyable and includes visits to Avoca and Sally Gap. A slightly less wild tour with a more historical, intellectual approach to Ireland is **Mary Gibbons Tours** (☎ 01/283-9973), which leads absorbing, in-depth tours of Dublin and Glendalough. In Belfast, don't miss the extraordinary **Black Taxi Tours** (☎ 0800/052-3914 or 0289/064-2264; www.belfasttours.com), which take you through the areas where the Troubles had the most impact, and explain it all in compassionate, firsthand terms. See p 386 for details.

Package Tours

Package tours are simply a way to buy the airfare, accommodations, and other elements of your trip (such as car rentals, airport transfers, and even activities) at the same time and often at discounted prices.

One good source for package deals of all kinds is the airlines themselves. Most major airlines offer air/land packages, including **American Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/321-2121; www.aavacations.com), **Delta Vacations** (☎ 800/221-6666; www.deltavacations.com), **Continental Airlines Vacations** (☎ 800/301-3800; www.covacations.com), and

United Vacations (☎ 888/854-3899; www.unitedvacations.com). Several big **online travel agencies**—Expedia, Travelocity, Orbitz, and Lastminute.com—also do a brisk business in packages.

Travel packages are also listed in the travel section of your local Sunday newspaper. Or check ads in the national travel magazines, such as *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine*, *Travel + Leisure*, *National Geographic Traveler*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*.

Fully escorted tours are where a travel company takes care of absolutely everything, from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation. Although we hope this book will help you to plan your trip independently and safely, many travelers still prefer the convenience and peace of mind that a fully escorted tour offers. They are particularly good for inexperienced travelers or people with limited mobility, and can also be a great way to make new friends. On the downside, you'll have little opportunity for serendipitous interactions with locals. The tours can be jam-packed with activities, leaving little room for individual sightseeing, whim, or adventure—plus they often focus on heavily trafficked sites, so you miss out on many a lesser-known gem.

Tourism Ireland (☎ 800/223-6470 in the U.S., or see p 478 for other countries; www.discoverireland.com) can give advice on escorted tours. Alternatively, you could try **Authentic Ireland** (☎ 888/771-8350 in the U.S., or 065/684-4947; www.authenticireland.com) or **CIE Tours International** (☎ 800/243-8687 in the U.S.; www.cietours.com).

Learning Trips

The **Willie Clancy Summer School (Scoil Samhraidh Willie Clancy)**, Miltown Malbay, County Clare (☎ 065/708-4156) is a weeklong summer school in Irish music, dance, and other aspects of traditional culture. Free Irish language lessons are also offered during the week, open to the general public. The Yeats Society Sligo (Hyde Bridge, Sligo, Co. Sligo; ☎ 071/914-2693; www.yeats-sligo.com) holds an annual **Yeats Summer School**, devoted to a deeper appreciation of the county's most famous poet. It runs for 2 weeks in late July/early August. Those after more serious learning opportunities

might be interested in the **International Summer School** program at the National University of Ireland, Galway (University Rd., Galway, Co. Galway; ☎ 091/750-304; www.nuigalway.ie/international_summer_school), which includes courses on Irish language and history.

For cooking schools that cater to travelers, see **Ballymaloe Cookery School**, below.

Food & Wine Tours

Good Food Ireland (Drinagh, Wexford, Co. Wexford; ☎ 053/915-8693; www.goodfoodireland.ie) offers gastro-tours of Cork, Dublin, and the West, lasting from 2 days to a week.

The “Cooking Tour” from **Hidden Ireland Tours** (☎ 251/478-7519 in the U.S., or ☎ 087/221-4002; www.hiddenirelandtours.com) includes 4 days at **Ballymaloe Cookery School** (p 196), before visiting artisan food markets around West Cork and the Ring of Kerry.

Just outside a small fishing village in County Cork, Ballymaloe is a working organic farm/culinary institute/restaurant/inn surrounded by 4 hectares (10 acres) of parterre gardens, mossy orchards, and a flourishing 40-hectare (100-acre) organic farm. Ballymaloe offers serious 12-week cooking courses for those pursuing a culinary career, but a long roster of shorter courses is available year-round, making it ideal for travelers, who can lodge in the whitewashed 18th-century cottages on-site. Classes might be anything from a 3-hour introduction to the art of sushi, tapas, or charcuterie to a full-day crash course in butter making, beekeeping, or making jams and preserves from the bounty of Ballymaloe’s own hives, dairy, and orchards. Essential techniques are taught in 2½-day and 5-day courses, which may focus on baking, for example, or entertaining or cooking family meals. Several of these are conceived as a series, so returning students can hone their skills on successive visits to Ballymaloe.

Historical Tours

In addition to the local history tours mentioned in previous chapters, **Time Travel Tours** (P.O. Box 4427, Wilsonville, OR; ☎ 877-787-7807; www.timetraveltours.com) offers a “Genealogy Tour,” which combines visits to historical sites with some of Ireland’s leading genealogy centers, in

the company of trained historians and genealogists. The “Irish Legends Tour” from **CIE Tours International** (☎ 800/243-8687 in the U.S.; www.cietours.com) includes a few more off-the-beaten-track historic sites than the average escorted tour. Those who don’t object to a bit of New Age spiritualism might enjoy the “Celtic Ireland Sacred Sites Tour” from **Celtic Mystical Journeys** (33 Woodsedge Dr., Asheville, NC; ☎ 877/756-8763; www.celticmysticaljourneys.com).

Outdoor Activities A to Z

Adventure Centers

There’s almost nothing you can’t do at the **Delphi Adventure Centre** (Leenane, Co. Galway; ☎ 095/42208; www.delphiadventureholidays.ie). They feature courses in kayaking, windsurfing, and sailing, as well as mountaineering, rappelling, hiking, and pony trekking. Another option is the **Little Killary Adventure Company**, also in Leenane (☎ 095/43411; www.killary.com), which will lead you on Hobie Cat sailing trips; guide you through explorations of the countryside on foot, kayak, or water skis; or take you straight up on rock-climbing expeditions, and more.

Bird-Watching

One of the best sources of information is the **Irish Birding** home page (www.irishbirding.com), which features links on birding events, sites, and news. Another excellent resource is **Birdwatch Ireland** (Rockingham House, Newcastle, Co. Wicklow; ☎ 01/281-9878; www.birdwatchireland.ie), an organization devoted to bird conservation in the Republic of Ireland. An equivalent organization in Northern Ireland is the **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds** (Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast; ☎ 048/9049-1547; www.rspb.org.uk/nireland).

Cycling

If you’re booking from the United States, consider **Backroads** (☎ 800/GO-ACTIVE 462-2848 or 510/527-1555; www.backroads.com) and **VBT** (☎ 800/BIKE-TOUR 245-3868; www.vbt.com). Both are well-regarded companies offering all-inclusive bicycle trips in Ireland. Included are bikes, gear, luggage transportation via a support van, good food, and accommodations in local inns and hotels of character—everything bundled into one price. If you

want your cycling trip to be orchestrated and outfitted by affable local experts, consider **Irish Cycling Safaris** (Belfield Bike Shop, Belfield House, University College Dublin, Dublin 4; ☎ 01/260-0749; www.cyclingsafaris.com).

Diving

The **Irish Underwater Council (CFT, or Comhairle Fo-Thuinn)** (78A Patrick St., Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin; ☎ 01/284-4601; www.cft.ie) is an association of more than 70 Irish diving clubs. Its website lists information on diving and snorkeling, dive centers, and hotels for divers throughout the Republic. Irish dive centers and schools include the **National Diving School** (Malahide Marina Village, Co. Dublin; ☎ 01/845-2000; natdive@indigo.ie); **Oceantec Adventures** (Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin; ☎ 01/280-1083); **Baltimore Diving & Watersport Centre** (Baltimore, Co. Cork; ☎ 028/20300; www.baltimore-diving.com); and **Scubadive West** (Renvyle, Co. Galway; ☎ 095/43922; www.scubadivewest.com).

Fishing

Many hotels have exclusive access to lakes and ponds and will rent boats, gear, and *ghillies* (fishing guides) to their guests. Nearly two dozen such hotels have gotten together to form the **Great Fishing Houses of Ireland** (www.irelandfishing.com), including **Delphi Lodge** in County Galway (p 338).

Golf

Many U.S. companies offer package golf tours. Among them are **Atlanticgolf** (☎ 800/542-6224 or 203/363-1003; www.atlanticgolf.com); **Golf International** (☎ 800/833-1389 or 212/986-9176; www.golfinternational.com); and **Wide World of Golf** (☎ 800/214-4653 or 831/625-9671; www.wideworldofgolf.com).

Horse Riding

Equestrian Holidays Ireland (www.ehi.ie) is a collection of some 37 riding centers, each registered with the Association of Irish Riding Establishments, offering a wide variety of accommodations and holiday riding experiences. EHI properties include **Dingle Horse Riding** (Ballinaboula, Dingle; ☎ 066/915-2199; www.dinglehorsriding.com) and **Drumindoo Stud & Equestrian Centre** (Knockranny, Westport, Co. Mayo; ☎ 098/25616).

Kayaking

For a rich source of information about kayaking in Ireland, visit the **Irish Canoe Union** website (www.canoe.ie). Courses and day trips for all levels of experience are available from **Deep Blue Sea Kayaking** (☎ 01/276-0263; www.deepblueseakayaking.com) and **Shearwater Sea Kayaking** (☎ 086/836-8736 or 087/988-5658; www.shearwaterseakayaking.ie). Although kayaking is mainly a summer activity, the latter also runs special winter excursions to the Skerries and Lambay Island in Dublin Bay. Kayaking vacations are also available at **Delphi Adventure Centre**, Leenane, County Galway (see p 471).

Sailing

Sailing schools hold courses for sailors at all levels of experience and sometimes offer day sailing as well. Ireland also has more than 120 yacht and sailing clubs along the coast and lakes. The best sources for information are Tourism Ireland, the **Irish Sailing Association** (3 Park Rd., Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin; ☎ 01/280-0239; www.sailing.ie), and the “Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions” from the Irish Cruising Club (www.irishcruisingclub.com). The direction guide gives information on harbors, port facilities, tides, and other topics of interest. It’s available in bookshops in Ireland or online at www.imray.com.

Walking

An excellent online resource with plenty of recommended walks is www.gowalkingireland.com. Before leaving home, you can order maps and guidebooks, including details of available accommodations en route, from **East West Mapping** (☎ 054/77835; www.eastwestmapping.ie). For a full walking holiday package in the southwest, contact **SouthWest Walks Ireland** (28 The Anchorage, Tralee, Co. Kerry; ☎ 066/712-8733; www.southwestwalksireland.com). For Counties Kerry and Connemara, consult **Backroads** (801 Cedar St., Berkley, CA; ☎ 800/GO-ACTIVE 462-2848; www.backroads.com).

Windsurfing

Try the following centers for equipment rental and lessons: the **Surfdock Centre** (Grand Canal Dock Yard, Ringsend, Dublin 4; ☎ 01/668-3945; www.surfdock.ie); the **Dunmore East Adventure Centre** (Dunmore East, Co. Waterford; ☎ 051/383783; www.dunmoreadventure.com);



> Surfing on the Galway coast.

Oysterhaven Windsurfing Centre (Oysterhaven, Kinsale, Co. Cork; ☎ 021/477-0738); and **Craigavon Watersports** (1 Lake Rd., Co. Armagh; ☎ 028/3834-2669; www.craigavon.gov.uk). Because even skilled windsurfers spend a sizable portion of their time in the water, the water quality is surely a concern.

Outdoor Outfitters by County

Wexford & Waterford

See p 164.

County Cork

BICYCLING The Mizen Head, Sheep's Head, and Beara peninsulas offer fine roads for cycling with great scenery and few cars. In Skibbereen, 18- and 21-speed bicycles can be rented from **Roycroft's Stores** (☎ 028/21235; roycroft@iol.ie); expect to pay around €70 per week, depending on the season.

BIRD WATCHING Cape Clear Island is the prime bird-watching spot in West Cork, especially between July and September. There is a bird observatory at the **North Harbour**, with a warden in residence from March to November and accommodations for bird-watchers. To arrange a stay, write to **Kieran Grace**, 84 Dorney Court,

The Best Beaches

Ireland has 27 designated European Union "Blue Flag" beaches and marinas, and Northern Ireland has 12. To find a complete listing or to check out a particular beach in advance, go to www.blueflag.org.

Shankhill, County Dublin. **Ciarán O'Driscoll** (☎ 028/39153) operates a B&B on the island.

DIVING The **Baltimore Diving & Watersports Centre**, Baltimore, County Cork (☎ 028/20300; www.baltimorediving.com), provides equipment and boats to certified divers for exploring the many shipwrecks, reefs, and caves in this region. The cost starts at around €50 per dive with equipment.

FISHING The West Cork coast is known for its many shipwrecks, making this one of the best places in Ireland for wreck fishing. **Mark and Patricia Gannon** of Woodpoint House, Courtmacsherry (☎ 023/46427), offer packages that include bed-and-breakfast in their idyllic stone farmhouse and a day's sea angling aboard one of their two new Aquastar fishing boats. A day's fishing costs around €60 per person.

KAYAKING With hundreds of islands, inlets, and sea caves, the West Cork coast is a sea

kayaker's paradise. **Lough Ine** offers warm, still waters for beginners, a tidal rapid for the intrepid, and access to a nearby headland riddled with caves. In Castletownbere, **Sea Kayaking West Cork** (☎ 086/309-8654; www.seakayakingwestcork.com) specializes in accompanied trips out and around Bere Island and as far as Glengarriff.

SAILING The **Glenans Irish Sailing Club** (www.gisc.ie; ☎ 01/661-1481) has two centers in Ireland, one of which is in Baltimore Harbour. The centers provide weeklong courses at all levels, using dinghies, cruisers, catamarans, or windsurfers; prices run from €350 to around €600. The living facilities are spartan, with dorm-style accommodations.

County Kerry

BICYCLING In Killarney, bikes can be rented from **David O'Sullivan's Cycles**, Bishop Lane, New Street, Killarney (☎ 064/31282). In Dingle, try the **Mountain Man**, Strand Street, Dingle (☎ 066/915-2400), or **Foxy John Moriarty**, also on Main Street (☎ 066/915-1316). Workers at all three shops know their areas well. Rental charges average €15 per day, €80 per week.

DIVING On the North Dingle Peninsula, **Harbour House**, The Maharees, Castlegregory (☎ 066/713-9292; www.waterworld.ie), is a diving center that offers packages including diving, room, and board at good rates. Classes for beginners are available.

FISHING Brown trout fishing is free on the Killarney Lakes, but a permit is necessary for the rivers Flesk and Laune. A trout permit costs €5 to €15 per day. A salmon fishing license costs €36 per day, €50 for 21 days. Some rivers require an additional permit, which costs €10 to €15 per day. All these can be obtained at the Fishery Office at the **Knockreer Estate Office**, New Street (☎ 064/31246). For tackle, bait, rod rental, and other fishing gear, as well as permits and licenses, try **O'Neill's**, 6 Plunkett St., Killarney (☎ 064/31970).

GOLF Waterville Golf Links, Waterville (☎ 066/947-4102; www.watervillegolflinks.ie), is an 18-hole championship course bounded on three sides by the sea. Expect to pay greens fees upwards of €180 daily. **Killarney Golf & Fishing Club**, Killorglin Road, Fossa (☎ 064/

31034; www.killarney-golf.com), has three courses; greens fees are €60–€120 weekdays and €70–€130 weekends. The **Dingle Golf Club** (Ceann Sibéal), Ballyferriter (☎ 066/915-6255; www.dinglelinks.com), has an 18-hole, par-72 course overlooking the Atlantic. Greens fees are €40 to €85 (from €45 on weekends).

HORSEBACK RIDING Hiring a horse costs about €25 per hour at **Killarney Riding Stables**, N72, Ballydowney (☎ 064/31686; www.killarney-trail-riding.com), and Rocklands Stables, Rockfield, Tralee Road (☎ 064/32592). **Dingle Horse Riding**, Ballinaboula House, Dingle (☎ 066/915-2199; www.dinglehorseriding.com), offers rides along nearby beaches or through the mountains. A 1½-hour mountain ride starts at €25.

WINDSURFING The beaches around Castlegregory offer a variety of conditions for windsurfing. Equipment can be hired from **Jamie Knox Watersports**, Maharees, Castlegregory (☎ 066/713-9411; www.jamieknox.com).

Galway & Clare

BICYCLING Bicycles can be rented year-round from **Mannion Cycles**, Bridge Street, Clifden, County Galway (☎ 095/21160). The rate for a regular touring bike in high season starts at around €10 per day.

FISHING County Galway is prime territory for sea fishing. To locate a boat-rental service, contact the **Western Regional Fisheries Board**, the Weir Lodge, Earl's Island, County Galway (☎ 091/563118; www.wrfb.ie). A license costs around €36 per day or €50 for 3 weeks. One of the most congenial fishing experiences we know of is a break at **Delphi Lodge** (Leenane, Co. Galway; ☎ 095/42222; www.delphilodge.ie). See p 338.

GOLF Lahinch Golf Club, Lahinch (☎ 065/708-1003; www.lahinchgolf.com) is renowned for its championship course. Greens fees run from €50 to €155.

Sligo & Mayo

BICYCLING To rent a bike in Yeats Country, contact **Flanagans Cycles**, Market Square, Sligo (☎ 071/44477).

FISHING Some of Europe's best fishing waters are to be found at **Lough Conn**, **Lough Mask**,



> *The Lough Erne Golf Resort.*

and the **River Moy**. For general information about fishing in County Mayo, contact the **North Western Regional Fisheries Board**, Ardnaree House, Abbey Street, Ballina (☎ 096/22788; www.cfb.ie). To arrange a day's fishing, contact **Cloonamoyne Fishery**, Castlehill, near Crossmolina, Ballina (☎ 096/51156; www.cloonamoynefishery.com). Daily rates average around €50 for a rowboat, €70 for a boat with engine, and €130 for a boat with engine and ghillie (guide).

GOLF The best course in the region is the 18-hole, par-71 championship **County Sligo Golf Club**, Rosses Point Road, Rosses Point (☎ 071/917-7134; www.countysligogolfclub.ie). Greens fees range from €40 to €150.

HORSEBACK RIDING You can arrange to ride for an hour or a day on the beach, in the countryside, or over mountain trails at **Sligo Riding**

Centre, Carrowmore (☎ 071/916-1353), or at **Woodlands Equestrian Centre**, Loughill, Lavagh, Tubbercurry, County Sligo (☎ 071/918-4207). Rates average €20 to €30 per hour.

KAYAKING Courses for adults and children are at the **Atlantic Adventure Centre** in Lecanvey, just outside of Westport, County Mayo (☎ 098/64806). Very reasonable accommodation rates are available for campers.

WINDSURFING & HANG GLIDING The constant wind off the Atlantic Ocean means that Achill Island is ideal for windsurfing and hang gliding. Richie O'Hara at **McDowell's Hotel** (Slieve-more Rd., near Dugort; ☎ 098/43148) gives surfing instructions and advice on rock climbing and rents out canoes and surfboards. For other options, contact the useful Atlantic Adventure Centre (see above).

33
16

The Savvy Traveler





> Shops in Clonakilty,
County Cork.

Before You Go

Government Tourist Offices

IN THE UNITED STATES **Tourism Ireland**, 345 Park Ave., New York, NY 10154 (☎ 800/223-6470 in the U.S., or 212/418-0800; www.discoverireland.com/us). **IN CANADA** **Tourism Ireland**, 2 Bloor St. W., Suite 1501, Toronto, ON M4W 3E2 (☎ 800/223-6470 or 416/925-6368; www.discoverireland.com/ca-en). **IN THE UNITED KINGDOM** **Tourism Ireland**, Nation's House, 103 Wigmore St., London W1U 1QS (☎ 020/7518-0800; www.discoverireland.com/gb). **IN AUSTRALIA** **Tourism Ireland**, 36 Carrington St., 5th Level, Sydney, NSW 2000 (☎ 02/9299-6177; www.discoverireland.com/au). **IN NEW ZEALAND** **Tourism Ireland**, Dingwall Building, Second Floor, 87 Queen St., Auckland (☎ 0064-9/379-8720; www.discoverireland.com/nz). **IN IRELAND** **Tourist Board/Bord Fáilte**, Baggot Street Bridge, Dublin 2 (☎ 01/602-4000; www.discoverireland.com/ie). **Northern Ireland Tourist Board**, 16 Nassau St., Dublin 2 (☎ 01/679-1977; www.discoverynorthernireland.com). **IN NORTHERN IRELAND** **Northern Ireland Tourist Board**, St. Anne's Court, 59 North St., Belfast BT1 1NB (☎ 028/9023-1221; www.discoverynorthernireland.com).

The Best Times to Go

The best time to visit is in spring and fall, when weather falls in between bad and good, but you get lower-than-high-season prices and the crowds have yet to descend.

Generally speaking, in summer, transatlantic airfares, car-rental rates, and hotel prices are highest and crowds at their most intense. But the days are long (6am sunrises and 10pm sunsets), the weather is warm, and every sightseeing attraction and B&B is open.

In winter, you can get rock-bottom prices on airfare and hotels, but it will rain, the wind will blow, and many rural sights and some rural B&Bs and restaurants will be closed.

Weather

In Ireland you will often hear the phrase, "Today we can expect showers, followed by periods of rain." In fact, rain is the one constant in Irish weather, although a bit of sunshine is usually just round the bend. The best of times and the worst of times are often only hours, or minutes, apart. It can be quite chilly when it rains, even

in the summer, so think *layers* when you dress to travel.

Festivals & Special Events

The most up-to-date listings of events can be found at www.discoverireland.ie and www.entertainment.ie for Ireland, and www.eventguide.ie and www.visitdublin.com for Dublin.

JANUARY In Dublin, **Funderland** is an annual indoor fair with rides, carnival stalls, and family entertainment. After Dublin, the fun moves to Limerick, Cork, and Belfast (☎ 061/419988; www.funfair.ie). **Yeats Winter School** in Sligo Town affords a weekend of relaxation, lectures, and a tour of Yeats Country (☎ 071/42693; www.yeats-sligo.com).

FEBRUARY **Dublin International Film Festival** features more than 100 films, with screenings of the best in Irish and world cinema (☎ 01/672-8861; www.dubliniff.com).

MARCH In the capital, the massive 4-day **St. Patrick's Day Festival** features street theater, music, fireworks, and other festivities culminating in Ireland's grandest parade (☎ 01/676-3205; www.stpatricksday.ie). In Kerry, the **Samhlaíocht Chiarrai (Kerry Arts Festival)** is a spring celebration of music, drama, film, dance, literature, crafts, and visual art (☎ 066/712-9934; www.samhlaíocht.com).

APRIL **Pan Celtic Festival**. For 5 days, Celts from around the world unite for culture, song, dance, and parades with marching bands and pipers. The festival moves to a different Irish city every year. Check www.panceltic.ie for details.

MAY **County Wicklow Gardens Festival**. In the county known as the "garden of Ireland," stately heritage properties and gardens open their gates to visitors on selected dates (☎ 0404/20070; www.visitwicklow.ie). From May through the summer, the epic **Belfast City Marathon** sees 6,000 international runners traversing 42km (26 miles) through the city. It starts and finishes at Maysfield Leisure Centre (☎ 028/9060-5944; www.belfastcitymarathon.com). In County Antrim, the **May Day Races** are one of the major events on the horse-racing calendar (☎ 028/9262-1256; www.downroyal.com). **Diversions Temple Bar** is an all-free, all-outdoor, all-ages cultural pro-

AVERAGE MONTHLY TEMPERATURES IN DUBLIN

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Temp (°F)	36-46	37-48	37-49	38-52	42-57	46-62	51-66	50-65	48-62	44-56	39-49	38-47
Temp (°C)	2-8	3-9	3-9	3-11	6-14	8-17	11-19	10-18	9-17	7-13	4-9	3-8

gram, featuring a combination of day and night performances in dance, film, theater, music, and visual arts (☎ 01/677-2255).

JUNE Waterford Maritime Festival. Quays of Waterford City. The highlight of this 4-day celebration is an international powerboat race from Waterford to Wales. Other events include kayak races and open-air concerts (☎ 051/873511). **Murphy's Cat Laughs Comedy Festival** in Kilkenny Town is an international stand-up comedy festival (☎ 056/776-3837; www.thecatlaughs.com). In various venues throughout Counties Dublin, Wicklow, and Kildare, the **Music Festival in Great Irish Houses** is a 10-day festival of classical music performed by leading Irish and world-renowned international artists in stately buildings and mansions (☎ 01/664-2822; www.musicgreatirishhouses.com). Visitors to Dublin's 4-day **Taste of Ireland** celebration can sample dishes prepared by some of the country's top chefs (☎ 01/210-9290; www.tastefestivals.ie). Throughout Dublin, the **Bloomsday Festival** celebrates Leopold Bloom, the central character of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Every aspect of the city, including the menus at restaurants and pubs, duplicates the aromas, sights, sounds, and tastes of Joyce's fictitious Dublin on June 16, 1904. Contact the James Joyce Centre, 35 N. Great George's Street, Dublin 1 (☎ 01/878-8547; www.jamesjoyce.ie), for more information; also see p 71. The **Cork Midsummer Arts Festival** features musical performances and traditional Irish *céili* bands and always has a strong literary component and bonfire nights (☎ 021/421-5131; www.corkfestival.com). The **Killarney SummerFest** rock music festival grows bigger every year and is one of the highlights of summer in Ireland (☎ 064-71560; www.killarneysummerfest.com).

JULY Battle of the Boyne Commemoration. This annual July 12 event, often called Orangeman's Day, recalls the historic battle between two 17th-century kings. It's a national day of

parades by Protestants all over Northern Ireland. Contact the House of Orange, 65 Dublin Rd., Belfast BT2 7HE (☎ 028/9032-2801). **Oxygen.** Punchestown Racecourse, County Kildare. This (mainly rock) music festival features nearly 100 acts playing on five stages over a weekend. For tickets, contact www.ticketmaster.ie or www.oxygen.ie. **Galway Arts Festival and Races** is a 2-week fest featuring international theater, big-top concerts, literary evenings, and street shows. The famous Galway Races follow, with 5 days of racing (☎ 091/566577; www.galwayartsfestival.ie). In Carrickfergus Castle, County Antrim, the **Lughnasa Fair** is a spectacular medieval revival in a 12th-century Norman castle with people in period costumes, medieval games, traditional food, entertainment, and crafts (☎ 028/4336-6455).

AUGUST In Dublin, the **Fáilte Ireland Horse Show** is the most important equestrian and social event on the Irish national calendar. (☎ 01/ 668-0866; www.dublinhorseshow.ie or www.rds.ie). The weeklong **Kilkenny Arts Festival** has it all, from classical and traditional music to plays, one-person shows, readings, films, poetry, and art exhibitions (☎ 056/775-2175; www.kilkennyarts.ie). The **Puck Fair**, in Killorglin, County Kerry, is one of Ireland's oldest festivals. Each year the residents of this tiny Ring of Kerry town capture a wild goat and enthrone it as "king" over 3 days of merrymaking that include open-air concerts, horse fairs, parades, and fireworks (☎ 066/976-2366; www.puckfair.ie). A gala atmosphere prevails at the 5-day **Rose of Tralee International Festival** in County Kerry. A full program includes concerts, street entertainment, horse races, and a beauty and talent pageant leading up to the televised selection of the "Rose of Tralee" (☎ 066/712-1322; www.roseoftralee.ie). The **Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival** in County Clare is still the biggest and best singles' event after all these years. A traditional "bachelor" festival carries on in the lovely spa town of Lisdoonvarna, with lots of wonderful music and dance

(☎ 065/707-4005; www.matchmakerireland.com).

SEPTEMBER Established in 2004, the **Cape Clear Island International Storytelling Festival** attracts traditional musicians from all over the world. (www.capeclearstorytelling.com). During **National Heritage Week**, more than 400 events are held throughout Ireland—walks, lectures, exhibitions, music recitals, and more (☎ 01/647-2455; www.heritageireland.ie). In Dublin, the **All-Ireland Hurling and Gaelic Football Finals** are Ireland's equivalent of the Super Bowl. Tickets can be obtained through Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.ie (☎ 01/836-3222; fax 01/836-6420). **Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Festival of Music in Ireland)**, in Tullamore, has been Ireland's premier summer festival of traditional music since 1951, with competitions held to select the all-Ireland champions in all categories of instruments and singing (☎ 057/932-5704; www.fleadh2009.com). In Dublin, the **Irish Antique Dealers' Fair** is the nation's premier annual antiques show, with hundreds of dealers from all over the island (☎ 01/679-4147). The **Galway International Oyster Festival** includes the World Oyster Opening Championship, a golf tournament, a yacht race, an art exhibition, traditional music, and, of course, oyster eating (☎ 091/522066; www.galwayoysterfest.com). The **Dublin Theatre Festival** showcases new plays by every major Irish company (☎ 01/677-8899; www.dublintheatrefestival.com).

OCTOBER **Kinsale International Gourmet Festival** is a well-respected annual fest, featuring special menus in all the restaurants and plenty of star chefs in town from abroad. Tickets may be purchased from **Maria O'Mahony Finishing Services** (☎ 021/477-3571) or online at www.kinsalerestaurants.com. During **Murphy's Cork International Film Festival**, cinemas throughout Cork show international features, documentaries, and short films (☎ 021/427-1711; www.corkfilmfest.org). In Galway, the **Baboró International Arts Festival for Children** is a fun-filled, educational festival geared to kids 3 to 12 years old, with theater, music, dance, mu-

seum exhibitions, and literary events (☎ 091/562667; www.baboro.ie). The year 2010 is the 12th year of the **RoolaBoola Children's Arts Festival** in Castlebar, County Mayo—a popular festival of theater, film, and related arts. It's aimed firmly at kids but never talks down to them (☎ 094/902-3733; www.thelinenhall.com/roola-boola). The **Wexford Festival Opera** sustains a jubilant, informal atmosphere with acclaimed productions of lesser-known 18th- and 19th-century operatic masterpieces (☎ 053/912-2144; www.wexfordopera.com). The **Guinness Cork Jazz Festival** is a first-rate festival of jazz with an international lineup of live acts (☎ 021/427-8979; www.corkjazzfestival.com). Nearby, Kinsale plays host to the Kinsale Fringe Jazz Festival. **Belfast Festival at Queens**, at Queens University, features a stellar program of drama, opera, music, and film (☎ 028/9097-1197; www.belfastfestival.com). On the last Monday in October, 5,000 runners from both sides of the Atlantic participate in the **Dublin City Marathon** (☎ 01/623-2250; www.dublincitymarathon.ie).

DECEMBER **Limerick Christmas Racing Festival** features 4 days of holiday horse racing (☎ 061/ 320000; www.limerick-racecourse.com). **Woodford Mummers Feile** in County Galway features traditional music, song, dance, and mime performed in period costume. A formal competition is held on the second day (☎ 0509/49248). In Dublin, **Leopardstown National Hunt Festival** features 3 days of winter racing for thoroughbreds (☎ 01/289-0500; www.leopardstown.com).

Cellphones

If your cellphone is on a GSM system, and you have a world-capable multiband phone, you can make and receive calls across much of the globe. Just call your wireless operator and ask for “international roaming” to be activated on your account. There's a Vodafone shop in Dublin airport where you can purchase an Irish SIM card for your own phone—this allows you to pay in-country rather than international rates for calls you receive while you're there. They also rent and sell mobile phones.

Getting There

By Plane

About half of all visitors from North America arrive in Ireland on direct transatlantic flights to **Dublin Airport** (☎ 1/814-1111; www.dublin-airport.com), Shannon Airport, or Belfast International Airport. The other half fly first into Britain or Europe, then “backtrack” into Ireland by air or sea.

FROM THE UNITED STATES & CANADA The Irish national carrier, **Aer Lingus** (☎ 800/474-7424 in the U.S., or 0818/365-000 in Ireland; www.aerlingus.ie), provides transatlantic flights to Ireland with scheduled, nonstop flights from New York (JFK), Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Baltimore to Dublin, Shannon, and Belfast international airports. **American Airlines** (☎ 800/433-7300; www.aa.com) flies directly from New York (JFK), Boston, and Chicago to Dublin and Shannon. **Delta Airlines** (☎ 800/241-4141; www.delta.com) flies directly from Atlanta and New York (JFK) to Dublin and Shannon. **Continental Airlines** (☎ 800/231-0856; www.continental.com) offers nonstop service to Dublin, Shannon, and Belfast from Newark. From Canada, **Air Canada** (☎ 888/247-2262 in the U.S. and Canada, or 01800/070-0900 in Ireland; www.aircanada.com) runs frequent direct flights to Shannon and Dublin from major Canadian cities.

FROM LONDON The following carriers offer direct flights from London: **British Airways** (☎ 800/247-9297 in the U.S., or 087/085-9850 in Britain; www.ba.com); **Aer Lingus** (☎ 800/474-7424 in the U.S., or 0818/365-000 in Ireland; www.aerlingus.ie); **Lufthansa** (☎ 800/581-6400 in the U.S.; www.lufthansa.co.uk); **bmi baby** (☎ 800/788-0555 in the U.S., or 01/242-0794 in Ireland; www.bmibaby.com); **CityJet** (☎ 01/605-0383 in Ireland, or 0870/142-4343 in Britain; www.cityjet.com); and **Ryanair** (☎ 0818/30-30-30 in Ireland, or 0871/246-0000 in Britain; www.ryanair.com).

FROM THE CONTINENT Major direct flights into Dublin from the Continent include service from Amsterdam on **KLM** (☎ 800/374-7747 in the U.S.; www.klm.com); Madrid and Barcelona on **Iberia** (☎ 800/772-4642 in the U.S.; www.iberia.com); Brussels on **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com);

Copenhagen on **Aer Lingus** (www.aerlingus.com) and **SAS** (☎ 800/221-2350 in the U.S.; www.scandinavian.net); Frankfurt on **Aer Lingus** and **Lufthansa** (☎ 800/645-3880 in the U.S.; www.lufthansa.com); Paris on **Aer Lingus** and **Air France** (☎ 800/237-2747 in the U.S.; www.airfrance.com); Prague on **CSA Czech Airlines** (☎ 800/223-2365 in the U.S.; www.czechairlines.com); and Rome on **Aer Lingus**.

Quite recently, **Cork Airport** (☎ 021/431-3131; www.cork-airport.com) surpassed Shannon as the second-ranked airport in Ireland, though it offers no nonstop transatlantic service. **Aer Lingus**, **KLM**, and **Ryanair** are among the airlines flying into Cork from Great Britain and the Continent (see above for their contact info). Direct service to Shannon from the Continent includes **Aer Lingus** from Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, Paris, and Zurich.

FROM NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIA There are no direct flights from New Zealand or Australia to Ireland; if you're coming from there, you'll most probably transfer in London.

By Train

There are a number of rail passes you can buy to cover train journeys across Europe or between Britain and Ireland within a certain period (usually a month). Some include ferry crossings too. For more information, see p 39.

By Ferry

If you're traveling to Ireland from Britain or the Continent, especially if you're behind the wheel of a car, ferries can get you there. The websites given below have regularly updated schedules and prices.

FROM BRITAIN Irish Ferries (www.irishferries.ie) operates from Holyhead, Wales, to Dublin; and from Pembroke, Wales, to Rosslare, County Wexford. For reservations, call **Scots-American Travel** (☎ 800/247-7268 in the U.S.; www.scots-american.com) or **Irish Ferries** (☎ 0870/517-1717 in the U.K., or 0818/300-400 in the Republic of Ireland, or 00353/818-300-400 in Northern Ireland; www.irishferries.com). **Stena Line** (☎ 01/204-7777 in Dublin; www.stenaline.com) sails from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire, 13km (8 miles) south of Dublin; from Fishguard, Wales, to Rosslare; and from Stranraer, Scotland, to Belfast, Northern Ireland. **Brittany Ferries** (☎ 021/427-7801 in Cork; www.brittany-ferries.com) oper-

ates from Holyhead to Dublin; from Fishguard and Pembroke to Rosslare; and from Stranraer to Belfast. **P&O Irish Sea Ferries** (www.poirishsea.com) operates from Liverpool to Dublin and from Cairnryan, Scotland, to Larne, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. For reservations, call Scots-American Travel (☎ 561/563-2856 in the U.S., 0870/242-4777 in Britain, or 01/638-3333 in Ireland; www.scotsamerican.com). **Isle of Man Steam Packet Company/Sea Cat** (☎ 0871/222-1333 in Britain, or 01/800-80-50-55 in Ireland; www.steam-packet.com) operates ferries from Liverpool to Dublin, and from Heysham and Troon, both in Scotland, to Belfast.

FROM THE CONTINENT Destinations are changeable, but at the moment **Irish Ferries** sails from Roscoff and Cherbourg, France, to Rosslare. For reservations, call Scots-American Travel (☎ 800/247-7268 in the U.S.; www.scotsamerican.com) or **Irish Ferries** (☎ 0870/517-1717 in the U.K., or 01/638-3333 in Ireland). **P&O Irish Sea Ferries** (www.poirishsea.com) operates from Cherbourg, France, to Rosslare. For reservations, call Scots-American Travel (☎ 561/563-2856 in the U.S., 0870/242-4777 in Britain, or 01/638-3333 in Ireland). **Brittany Ferries** (☎ 021/427-7801 in Cork; www.brittany-ferries.com) connects Roscoff, France, to Cork. **Note to Eurailpass holders:** Because Irish Ferries is a member of the Eurail system, you can travel free between Rosslare and Roscoff or Cherbourg.

Getting Around

By Car

Although Ireland has a reasonably extensive network of public transportation, there are big advantages to having your own car. A car gives you the freedom to explore tiny villages and rural castles. In a nutshell, if you want to see the “real Ireland” outside the major cities, you’ll want a car.

Unfortunately, rental cars in Ireland almost always have standard transmissions. Driving on the left side of the road and shifting gears with your left hand can take some getting used to if you’re not accustomed to it.

Most rental-car agencies in the Republic won’t rent to you (1) if you’re under 23 or over 74 (there’s no upper age limit in the North) or (2) if your license has been valid for less than a year.

Note: Double-check your credit card’s policy on picking up the insurance on rental cars. Almost none of the American-issued cards—including gold cards—cover the collision damage waiver (CDW) on car rentals in Ireland anymore.

For visitors who drive on the right at home, it’s helpful to have a navigator. Getting used to left-side driving, left-handed stick shift, narrow roads, and a new landscape are enough for the driver to manage without having to find his or her way to a destination. (Alternatively, you could hire a GPS navigation device with your car—most major rental firms now offer them.)

“Roundabouts” (aka traffic circles or rotaries) are found on most major roads and take a little getting used to. Remember always to yield to traffic on the right as you approach a roundabout and follow the traffic to the left, signaling before you exit the circle.

Car Rentals

Try to make car-rental arrangements well in advance of your departure. Leaving such arrangements until the last minute—or, worse, until your arrival in Ireland—can mean you wind up either walking or wishing you were. Try **Alamo-Treaty** (☎ 800/462-5266 in the U.S.; www.goalamo.com), **Auto-Europe** (☎ 888/223-5555 in the U.S.; www.autoeurope.com), **Avis** (☎ 800/230-4898 in the U.S.; www.avis.com), **Budget** (☎ 800/527-0700 in the U.S.; www.budget.com), **Hertz** (☎ 800/654-3001 in the U.S.; www.hertz.com), **Murray’s Europcar** (☎ 800/800-6000 in the U.S.; www.europcar.ie), **National** (☎ 800/227-7368 in the U.S.; www.nationalcar.com), and **Payless/Bunnatty** (☎ 800/729-5377 in the U.S.; www.paylesscarrental.com). In addition, a variety of Ireland-based companies have desks at the major airports and full-service offices in city or town locations. The leader among the Irish-based firms is **Dan Dooley/Kenning Rent-a-Car** (☎ 800/331-9301 in the U.S.; www.dan-dooley.ie).

PARKING

Parking in most villages and small towns is easy and usually free. Look out for public parking lots—they’re often free and are clearly marked at the edge of town centers. In major towns and cities, virtually all streets are pay-to-park. Look for signs directing you to ticket machines; there should be one each block or so. In Belfast and other large cities in the North, certain security

measures are still in place from the bad old days. “Control zone” signs indicate that no unattended vehicle can be left there at any time. That means if you are a single traveler, you cannot leave your car; if you are a twosome, one person must remain in the car while it’s parked.

ROAD MAPS & ATLASES

Most bookstores with reasonably large foreign travel sections will probably stock a decent road atlas for Ireland. If you need to order one, try the **Frommer’s Road Atlas Ireland** (Wiley); we’ve also found the **AA Road Atlas of Ireland** (AA Publishing) to be very comprehensive.

By Train

Iarnród Éireann (☎ 1850/366222 or 01/836-6222; www.irishrail.ie) operates the train services in Ireland. With the exception of flying, train travel is the fastest way to get around the country, but trains generally serve only large towns frequently. Most lines radiate from Dublin to other principal cities and towns. From Dublin, the journey time to Cork is 3 hours; to Belfast, 2 hours.

In addition to the Irish Rail service between Dublin and Belfast, **Translink** (☎ 028/9066-6630; www.nirailways.co.uk) operates routes from Belfast that include Coleraine and Derry, in addition to virtually all 21 localities in Northern Ireland. The same organization runs the Belfast city service, called **Citybus**.

By Bus

Bus travel is affordable, reliable, and comfortable, and buses go more places than trains. **Bus Éireann** (☎ 01/830-2222; www.buseireann.ie) operates an extensive system. See **Translink** for detailed information on services within Northern Ireland (☎ 028/9066-6630; www.nirailways.co.uk/atulsterbus.asp).

By Plane

Because Ireland is such a small country, it’s unlikely you’ll be flying from place to place. In case you do need to get somewhere very quickly, or driving is not an option, try the main domestic carrier, **Aer Arann** (☎ 011/353-6170-44280 in the U.S., 818/210210 in Ireland, or 0800/587-23-24 in the U.K.; www.aerarann.com). It operates flights between Dublin and Belfast, Cork, Derry, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Knock, and Sligo, as well as from Galway to the Aran Islands.

Tips on Accommodations

B&Bs

Most B&Bs are in family homes. Some are lovely, some not so much. Do your research in advance to make sure you know what you’re getting. In a moderately priced B&B, the average cost for a room with private bathroom is roughly €45 per person per night. Obviously, some B&Bs charge less than this, and some charge more. **Note:** More and more B&Bs accept credit cards, but many still do not—ask in advance.

In the North, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board inspects each of its recommended B&Bs annually. Its *Information Guide to Bed & Breakfast* is available free from the NITB. The NITB also

Rules of the Road

1. Drive on the left side of the road.
2. Road signs are in kilometers, except in Northern Ireland, where they are in miles.
3. On motorways, the left lane is the traveling lane. The right lane is for passing (though many drivers just use it as the “fast lane”).
4. Everyone must wear a seat belt by law. Children must be in age-appropriate child seats.
5. Children under age 12 are not allowed to sit in the front seat.
6. When entering a roundabout (traffic circle), give way to traffic coming from the right.
7. The speed limits are 50kmph (31 mph) in built-up areas; 80kmph (50 mph) on regional and local roads, sometimes referred to as non-national roads; 100kmph (62 mph) on national roads, including divided highways (called dual carriageways), and 120kmph (75 mph) on freeways (called motorways).

Ticket Talk

When buying travel tickets—air, ferry, or train—ask for either a “single” (one-way) or a “return” (round-trip).

sells a useful comprehensive annual listing titled *Where to Stay in Northern Ireland*.

Self-Catering

If you want to stay awhile and establish a base, you might want to consider renting an apartment, town house, cottage, or castle. Especially for groups traveling together, the price can be much lower than staying in a hotel, or even a youth hostel. Try **Trident Holiday Homes**, 15 Irishtown Road, Irishtown, Dublin 4 (☎ 01/201-8440; www.thh.ie). For alluring seaside properties in west County Cork, try **Cashelfean Holiday Houses**, Durrus, County Cork (☎ 027/62000; www.cashelfean.com). In the west of Ireland a selection of traditional Irish cottages, fully equipped to meet modern expectations, is offered by **Rent an Irish Cottage PLC**, 85 O'Connell Street, Limerick, County Limerick (☎ 061/411109; www.rentacottage.ie). For those interested in sampling the rural lifestyle, **Irish Country Holidays**, Discovery Centre, Rears Cross, County Tipperary (☎ 067/27790) has properties all over Ireland. Finally, for self-catering in any of Northern Ireland's areas of outstanding natural beauty, there is one surefire recommendation: **Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.**, St. Anne's Court, 59 North Street, Belfast BT1 1NB (☎ 0870/236-1630; www.ruralcottageholidays.com).

Youth Hostels

An Óige, the Irish Youth Hostel Association, 61 Mountjoy Street, Dublin 7 (☎ 01/830-4555; www.anoige.ie), runs dozens of exquisitely located hostels in rural Ireland.

In the North, **YHANI** (Youth Hostels Association of Northern Ireland), 22-32 Donegall Road, Belfast BT12 5JN (☎ 028/9032-4733; www.hini.org.uk), runs similar hostels of real character.

The Bottom Line on Beds

RATES Room charges quoted in this guide include 13.5% VAT in the Republic of Ireland and 17.5% VAT in Northern Ireland. They do not (unless otherwise noted) include service charges, which are usually between 10% and 15%. Most

hotels and guesthouses automatically add the service charge onto your final bill, although in recent years many smaller places have stopped charging for service, leaving it as an option for the guest. Home-style B&Bs do not ordinarily charge for service.

TERMINOLOGY The Irish use the phrase “en suite” to indicate a room with private bathroom. A “double” has a double bed, and a “twin” has two single beds. Queen- and king-size beds are not common except in large, deluxe hotels.

RESERVATIONS If you are traveling from the U.S., you should always have at least your first night's room booked, as you will be required to give an address at the immigration desk.

If you have trouble finding a place to stay, stop in at the local tourist office or call the computerized reservation service called **Gulliver** (☎ 00800/668-668-66; www.gulliver.ie).

Sustainable Tourism

You can find eco-friendly travel tips, statistics, and touring companies and associations—listed by destination under “Travel Choice”—at **The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)** website, www.ecotourism.org. **Ecotravel.com** is part online magazine and part eco-directory that lets you search for touring companies in several categories (water-based, land-based, spiritually oriented, and so on).

Many airlines now let you offset your carbon emissions for a small surcharge; ask when booking. For more information on how carbon offsetting works, see www.climatecare.org.

For information about the ethics of swimming with dolphins and other outdoor activities, visit the **Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society** (www.wdcs.org) and **Tread Lightly** (www.treadlightly.org).

Ireland Fast Facts

American Express

The American Express office in Ireland is in Dublin at **Keith Prowse Travel**, Lower Abbey Street, Irish Life Mall (☎ 01/878-3500). There are no longer branches in the North. In an emergency, traveler's checks can be reported lost or stolen by dialing collect (to the U.S.) ☎ 00-1-336-393-1111.

ATM Networks

The **Cirrus** (☎ 800/424-7787; www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (☎ 800/843-7587 in the U.S., or 1800/558-002 toll-free in Ireland; www.visa.com) networks span the globe. Look at the back of your bank card to see which network you're on, then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

Business Hours

Banks are open 10am to 4pm Monday to Wednesday and Friday, and 10am to 5pm Thursday. Post offices (also known as An Post) are generally open from 9am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1:30pm Saturday. Some take an hour for lunch from 1 to 2pm. Museums and sights are generally open 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Saturday, and 2 to 5pm Sunday. Shops generally open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, with late opening on Thursday until 7 or 8pm.

Electricity

The Irish electric system operates on 220 volts with a large plug bearing three rectangular prongs. The Northern Irish system operates on 250 volts with a similar plug. To use standard American 110-volt appliances, you'll need both a transformer and a plug adapter. Most new laptops have built-in transformers, but some do not, so beware.

Embassies & Consulates

The **American Embassy** is at 42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4 (☎ 01/668-8777); the **Canadian Embassy** at 3rd Floor, 7-8 Wilton Terrace, Dublin 2 (☎ 01/417-4100); the **British Embassy** at 29 Merrion Road, Dublin 2 (☎ 01/205-3700); and the **Australian Embassy** at 7th Floor, Fitzwilton House, Wilton Terrace,

Dublin 2 (☎ 01/664-5300). In addition, there is an **American Consulate** at 14 Queen Street, Belfast BT1 6EQ (☎ 028/9038-6100).

Emergencies

For police (called "Garda" in the Republic), fire, ambulance, or other emergencies, dial ☎ 999.

Family Travel

Recommended family travel websites include **Family Travel Forum** (www.familytravelforum.com), **Family Travel Network** (www.familytravelnetwork.com), **Traveling Internationally with Your Kids** (www.travelwithyourkids.com), and **Family Travel Files** (www.thefamilytravelfiles.com).

Gay & Lesbian Travelers

Ireland has come a long way since homosexuality was legalized in 1993 (1982 in the North), but gay and lesbian visitors should be aware that this is still a deeply conservative country. With rare exceptions, gay communities are relatively low-key, and even in such ostensibly liberal places as Dublin and Galway, queer-bashing is not unheard of. Proceed with caution. Recommended websites for gay and lesbian travelers include **Gay Ireland Online** (www.gay-ireland.com) and **Outhouse** (www.outhouse.ie).

Holidays

The Republic observes the following national holidays: New Year's Day (Jan 1), St. Patrick's Day (Mar 17), Easter Monday (variable), May Day (May 1), first Mondays in June and August (Summer Bank Holidays), last Monday in October (Autumn Bank Holiday), Christmas (Dec 25), and St. Stephen's Day (Dec 26). Good Friday (the Friday before Easter) is mostly observed, but not statutory.

In the North, the schedule of holidays is the same as in the Republic, with some exceptions: the North's Summer Bank Holidays fall on the last Mondays of May and August; the Battle of the Boyne is celebrated on Orangeman's Day (July 12); and Boxing Day (Dec 26) follows Christmas.

Insurance

For **trip-cancellation insurance** contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (☎ 866/807-3982; www.accessamerica.com); **Travel Guard International** (☎ 800/826-4919; www.travelguard.com); **Travel Insured International** (☎ 800/243-

3174; www.travelinsured.com); and **Travellex Insurance Services** (☎ 888/457-4602; www.travellex-insurance.com).

Medical coverage overseas is not provided by most U.S. health plans (including Medicare and Medicaid). Good providers include **MEDEX Assistance** (☎ 410/453-6300; www.medexassist.com) and **Travel Assistance International** (☎ 800/821-2828; www.travelassistance.com).

Internet Access

Virtually every library in the country offers free Internet access, though you may have to call ahead to reserve a space. Additionally, an increasing number of Internet cafes are sprouting up across the island.

Lost Property

If your passport is lost or stolen, contact your country's embassy immediately. Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover that your wallet has been lost or stolen and file a report at the nearest police precinct. For **American Express**, call ☎ 1850/882028 in Ireland, or ☎ 01273/696993 in Northern Ireland; for **MasterCard**, call ☎ 1800/557378 toll-free in Ireland; and for **Visa**, call ☎ 1800/558002 toll-free in Ireland, ☎ 0800/891725 in Northern Ireland.

Mail & Postage

In Ireland, mailboxes are painted green with the word POST on top. In Northern Ireland, they usually look the same but are painted red with a royal coat of arms. From the Republic, an airmail letter or postcard to the United States or Canada not exceeding 25 grams costs €82. From Northern Ireland to the United States or Canada, airmail letters not exceeding 20 grams cost 81p (\$1.62), and postcards 50p (\$1). Letters from both take about 10 days to arrive.

Passports

For Residents of Australia: You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of Passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the Australian Passport Information Service at ☎ 131-232, or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

For Residents of Canada: Passport applications are available at travel agencies through-

out Canada or from the central Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (☎ 800/567-6868; www.ppt.gc.ca).

For Residents of New Zealand: You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the Passports Office at ☎ 0800/225050 in New Zealand, or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

For Residents of the United Kingdom: To pick up an application for a standard 10-year passport (5-year passport for children 15 and under), visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency, or contact the United Kingdom Passport Service at ☎ 0870/521-0410 or search its website at www.ips.gov.uk.

For Residents of the United States:

Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the U.S. State Department website at www.travel.state.gov. To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website or call the National Passport Information Center toll-free number (☎ 877/487-2778) for automated information.

Pharmacies

Drugstores are called "chemist shops" and are found in every city, town, and village. Look under "Chemists—Pharmaceutical" in the Golden Pages of the Irish telephone book or "Chemists—Dispensing" in the Yellow Pages of the Northern Ireland telephone book.

Safety

By U.S. standards, Ireland is very safe, but, particularly in the cities, it's not safe enough to warrant carelessness. Be wary of the usual tourists' plagues: pickpockets, purse snatchers, and car thieves. Most advice is standard for travel anywhere: Do not leave cars unlocked or cameras, binoculars, or other expensive equipment unattended. Ask at your hotel which areas are safe and which are not. Take a taxi back to your hotel if you're out after about 11pm.

Seniors

In most places, people over the age of 60 qualify for reduced admission to theaters, museums, and other attractions. Seniors, known (unfortunately) throughout Ireland as **OAPs** (Old Age Pensioners), enjoy a variety of discounts

and privileges. The Irish Tourist Board can offer advice on how to find the best discounts. Members of **AARP** (☎ 888/687-2277; www.aarp.org) get discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. **SAGA Tours** (☎ 800/343-0273 or 617/262-2262) operates tours to Ireland specifically geared to seniors or anyone over 50.

Smoking

Ireland has a broad antismoking law that bans smoking in all public places, including bars, restaurants, and hotel lobbies.

Taxes

As in many European countries, sales tax is VAT (value-added tax) and is often already included in the price quoted to you or shown on price tags. In the Republic, VAT rates vary—for hotels, restaurants, and car rentals, it is 13.5%; for souvenirs and gifts, it is 21%. In Northern Ireland, the VAT is 17.5% across-the-board. VAT charged on services such as hotel stays, meals, car rentals, and entertainment cannot be refunded to visitors, but the VAT on products such as souvenirs is refundable.

Telephones

To call Ireland from home:

1. **Dial the international access code:** 011 from the U.S., 00 from the U.K., 0011 from Australia, or 0170 from New Zealand.
2. **Dial the country code:** 353 for the Republic, 44 for the North.
3. **Dial the local number**, remembering to omit the initial 0, which is for use only within Ireland (for example, to call the County Kerry number 066/12345 from the United States, you'd dial 011-353-66/12345).

To make international calls: First dial 00 and then the country code (U.S. or Canada 1, U.K. 44, Australia 61, New Zealand 64). Next you dial the area code and local number. For example, to call the U.S. number 212/000-0000 you'd dial ☎ 00-1-212/000-0000. The toll-free international access code for AT&T is ☎ 1-800-

550-000; for Sprint it's ☎ 1-800-552001; and for MCI it's ☎ 1-800-551001.

To make local calls: To dial a local number within an area code, drop the initial 0. To dial a number within Ireland but in a different area code, use the initial 0. Local calls from a phone booth require a Callcard (in the Republic) or Phonecard (in the North). Both are prepaid computerized cards that you insert into the phone instead of coins. They can be purchased in post offices and shops (such as newsstands).

Also see the section “**cellphones**,” on p 480.

Tipping

For taxi drivers, hairdressers, and other providers of service, tip as you would at home, an average of 10% to 15%. For restaurants, the policy is usually printed on the menu—either a gratuity of 10% to 15% is automatically added to your bill, or it's left up to you. As a rule, bartenders do not expect a tip.

Travelers with Disabilities

A recommended online resource for travelers with disabilities is **www.disability.ie**. The **Irish Wheelchair Association** (☎ 01/818-6400; www.iwa.ie) loans free wheelchairs to travelers in Ireland. If you plan to travel by train in Ireland, be sure to check out Iarnród Éireann's website (www.irishrail.ie), which includes services for travelers with disabilities. A Mobility Liaison Officer (☎ 01/703-2634) can arrange assistance for travelers with disabilities if given 24 hours' notice. For advice on travel to Northern Ireland, contact **Disability Action** (☎ 028/9029-7880; www.disabilityaction.org).

Water

Tap water throughout the island of Ireland is generally safe, although recently there have been some problems with contaminated water in County Clare, particularly in the town of Ennis. In case you're concerned, bottled water is readily available.



> Minard Castle, overlooking Kilmurray Bay.



Index

A

Achill Island, 35, 347, 364-65, 375
 staying/dining on, 10, 365
 water sports, 35, 475

Achill Walks Festival, 373

Accommodations, 483-84. *See also*
specific regions/cities and locations
 best, 10

Adventure centers, 205, 329, 471, 472

Aer Arann, 483. *See also* "Fast Facts"
for specific regions/cities

Aer Arann Islands, 301, 327

Aer Lingus, 231, 481. *See also* "Fast
 Facts" *for specific regions/cities*

Affordable traveling, 20, 36-39, 478

Aghadoe Church (near Killarney), 225

Aghadoe Heights Hotel & Spa (near
 Killarney), 225, 246, 247

Aille Cross Equestrian Centre (near
 Loughrea), 329

Aillwee Cave (near Ballyvaughan),
 318, 322, 333, 340

Air travel, 481, 483. *See also* "Fast
 Facts" *for specific regions/cities*

Alcohol. *See* Beer, wine, and spirits;
 Pubs

Amelia Earhart Centre (Ballyarnett),
 447

American Express, 485

An Bodhran (Cork City), 185

Ancient sites and ruins, 14, 44-45

Beaghmore Stone Circles, 451

Carrowkeel Passage Tomb
 Cemetery, 34, 45, 348, 354

Carrowmore Megalithic
 Cemetery, 14, 34-35, 45, 345,
 348, 354-55

Céide Fields, 31, 45, 344, 345,
 348, 368, 425

County Meath Day Trip, 124-28

Drombeg Stone Circle, 171, 214

Dún an Oir Fort, 261

Gallarus Oratory, 261, 279

Glendalough, 14, 25, 44, 48,
 116-18

Gleninsheen Wedge Tomb, 9

Hill of Tara, 44, 127-28

Knocknarea, 45, 355, 362

Knowth, 44, 124-25

Legananny Dolmen, 416

Loughcrew megalithic tombs, 44

Newgrange, 7, 14, 44, 125-27

Poulabrone Dolmen, 9, 331, 333

The Rock of Cashel, 14

St. Kevin's Way, 44, 117-18

Skellig Michael, 14, 28, 257, 262,
 266, 270-71

Trim Castle, 128

Andrew Jackson Centre
 (Carrickfergus), 410

An Droichead Beag (Dingle), 278

Animals and wildlife. *See also*
 Marine attractions

Belfast Zoo, 43, 390, 442

Castle Espie wildlife center, 43,
 391, 443

The Donkey Sanctuary, 41, 201

Dublin Zoo, 40, 59, 60

Fota Wildlife Park, 41, 169, 173,
 200, 208-9

Kennedy's Pet Farm, 42, 284

pony trekking, 42, 329, 337,
 447, 471

An Óige Youth Hostel (Cape Clear
 Island), 205, 484

An Pucan (Galway City), 294-95,
 299, 312

An Spailpin Fanac (The Migrant
 Worker; Cork City), 185, 197

Antrim, County, 34, 35, 43

Antrim Coast, 420-21, 423, 426-31
 folklore of, 445
 hiking/pony trekking on, 447
 staying/dining on, 430-31

Aran Islands, 30-31, 319, 322, 467
 air service to, 301, 327, 483
 day trip on, 300-1
 ferry service to, 295, 301, 334
 tours of, 470

Aran sweaters, 87, 191, 230, 295,
 303, 306. *See also* Woollen wear

Áras an Uachtaráin (The Irish
 President's House; Dublin),
 37-38, 60

Archaeology & History Museum
 (Dublin), 68

Ardclinis Activity Centre
 (Cushendall), 43, 444

Ardmore High Cross, 152

Ards Peninsula, 414-16

Armagh, County, 35, 453
 attractions in, 32-34, 422-23,
 439-40, 450

ATMs/Cashpoints, 485.
See also "Fast Facts" *for*
specific regions/cities

Avoca Handweavers
 Dublin, 49, 82, 87-88, 91

Moll's Gap, 12, 225, 241, 275

B

Baginbun Head, 138

Ballina (*Béal an Átha*), 31, 344-45,

347, 366-68, 375
 staying/dining in, 369

Ballinskelligs, 266, 271

Ballintoy, 427-28

Ballyarnett Community Farm and
 Wildlife Centre, 447

Ballydehob (*Béal Átha Dá Chab*), 171

Ballyhack, 138

Ballyhack Castle, 138, 146

Ballymaloe Cookery School
 (Shanagarry), 196, 206, 210, 471

Ballymaloe House and Gardens
 (Shanagarry), 182, 196, 206, 210

Garden Café, 196, 206

Ballyvaughan, 30, 318, 321-22

Banking, 485. *See also* "Fast Facts"
for specific regions/cities

Bank of Ireland/Parliament House
 (Dublin), 38, 55-56

Bantry House, 170-71, 214

Barleycove Beach, 171, 204, 216

Barrys Court Castle (Carrigtwohill),
 173, 207-8

Beaches, 473

Antrim Coast, 426-28

Barleycove, 171, 204, 216

Clare Coast, 334-35

Dingle Peninsula, 281

Glenbeigh, 257, 265

Ring of Hook, 137, 138

Ring of Kerry, 264-67

Sligo/Mayo, 35, 364, 372-73, 475

Spiddal/Salthill, 295, 302-3

Beaghmore Stone Circles (near
 Cookstown), 451

Beamish & Crawford Brewery (Cork),
 197

Beatrice Kennedy (Belfast), 382,
 398, 399

Beckett, Samuel, 64, 68, 72, 75,
 77, 465

Bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs), 483-84
 Cape Clear Island, 205

Beer, wine, and spirits, 61, 196, 197,
 198-99, 425. *See also* Pubs;
 Whiskey

distilleries, 198, 199, 207, 429

Guinness, 61, 196, 198, 230

"winegeese," 186, 198-99

Behan, Brendan, 48, 49, 63, 64, 68,
 70, 110, 112, 465

Belfast, 32, 376-417, 420, 422.
See also Northern Ireland; The
 Troubles

arriving in, 417

for children, 43, 442

fast facts, 417

favorite moments, 378-79

- free attractions, 36
- hotels, 402-5
- murals, 7, 36, 386, 388-89, 438
- nightlife, 406-9
- outdoor attractions, 390-93
- political tours, 32, 386, 438, 439, 470
- politics and history, 438, 458-59, 462-63
- pub crawl, 386-87
- restaurants, 398-401
- shopping, 394-97
- suggested tours, 380-87, 390-93, 410-416
 - surrounding area, 410-16
- Belfast Botanic Gardens and Palm House, 32, 36, 381
- Belfast Castle, 32, 36, 390-91, 393
- Belfast Cathedral, 385
- Belfast City Hall, 36, 378, 382-83, 420
- Belfast Lough, 393, 410-11
- Belfast Peace Line/Peace Wall, 7, 388
- Belfast Zoo, 43, 390, 442
- Ben Bulbin (near Sligo Town), 353, 355, 374
- Benwee Head (near Portacloy), 373
- The Bervie (Achill Island), 10, 365
- Bicycling, 471-72
 - Cork (Co.), 473
 - Galway/Clare, 474
 - Kerry (Co.), 474
 - Killarney National Park, 237
 - Sligo/Mayo, 474
 - Wexford/Waterford, 164
- The Bierhaus (Cork City), 197
- Bird-watching, 471
 - Dublin and nearby, 60, 127
 - Cork (Co.), 204-5, 473
 - Galway/Clare, 322, 333, 334
 - Great Blasket Island, 280
 - Killarney, 229
 - Northern Ireland, 390, 391, 414, 443, 449
 - Skellig Islands, 270
 - Wexford (Co.), 137, 142, 162
- Black Abbey (Kilkenny), 121-22
- Blackstairs Mountains (near Enniscorthy), 164
- Black Taxi Tours (Belfast), 32, 386, 420, 438, 439, 470
- Blake's Castle (Galway City), 297
- Blarney Castle and Stone, 41, 169, 172, 179, 201
- Blasket Islands (*Na Blascaodai*), 261, 280
- Blennerville-Tralee steam train, 42, 286-87
- Blennerville Windmill, 260
- Bloomsday (Dublin), 70, 71, 479.
 - See also Joyce, James
- The Blue Haven (Kinsale), 190, 192, 195
- Blue Pool Nature Trail (Killarney), 229
- Boa and White Islands, 451
- The Bogside (Derry), 432, 434, 440
 - Bogside Artists, 440
- The Book of Kells, 55, 72, 76, 273
- Bridewell Lane (Killarney), 233
- BritRail, 39
- Brookhall Historical Farm (near Lisburn), 412
- Brown Thomas. See also BT2.
 - Dublin, 12, 82, 86
 - Galway City, 305
- Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre Café (Newgrange), 127
- BT2 (Dublin), 12, 82, 87
- The Bull Ring (Wexford Town), 132, 136, 141
- Bunratty Castle & Folk Park, 42, 320, 336
- The Burren, 28-30, 318, 330-33
 - The Burren Centre, 330
 - The Burren National Park, 9, 28-30, 318, 322, 330
 - The Burren Way, 9, 322
- Burren Birds of Prey Centre, 333
- Bus Éireann, 470, 483. See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
- Bushmills, 43
- Business hours, 485
- Busker Brownes (Galway City), 299, 308
- Bus travel, 20-21, 38, 39, 483. See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
- C**
- Café Paul Rankin (Belfast), 379, 398, 399
- Caherdaniel, 262-63, 266-67
- Cahersiveen, 27, 28
- Cape Clear Island, 172, 204-5, 473
 - Adventure Centre (*Cléire Lasmuigh*), 205
 - International Storytelling Festival, 205, 480
- Carlingford, 8
- Carnlough, 426
- Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge (Larrybane), 420, 423, 428, 444, 452
- Carrickfergus, 34, 420, 423, 429, 432, 439, 442-43
- Carrowkeel Passage Tomb Cemetery (near Sligo Town), 34, 45, 348, 354
- Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery (near Sligo Town), 14, 34-35, 45, 345, 348, 354-55
- Car travel, 482-83. See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 - Irish-language road signs, 281
 - miles vs. kilometers, 21, 35, 382, 421, 483
 - parking, 482-83
 - rentals, 20, 482
 - road maps/atlasses, 483
 - rules of the road, 483
- Cashpoints/ATMs, 485. See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
- Castle Espie wildlife center (Comber), 43, 391, 443
- Castlegregory (*Caislean an Ghriare*), 261, 281
- Castles, 17
 - Ballyhack Castle, 138, 146
 - Barryscourt Castle, 173, 207-8
 - Belfast Castle, 32, 36, 390-91, 393
 - Blake's Castle, 297
 - Blarney Castle and Stone, 41, 169, 172, 179, 201
 - Bunratty Castle & Folk Park, 42, 320, 336
 - Carrickfergus Castle, 17, 43, 379, 410-11, 439, 442-43
 - Desmond Castle, 26, 168, 173, 186
 - Dublin Castle, 24, 52, 460
 - Dundrum Castle, 439
 - Dunguaire Castle, 297, 312
 - Dunluce Castle, 423, 429, 440
 - Enniscorthy Castle, 136, 145
 - Hillsborough Castle & Gardens, 411-12
 - Kilkenny Castle, 17, 120-21
 - Lismore Castle, 17, 134, 152-53
 - Lynch's Castle, 296
 - Parke's Castle, 348, 356, 374
 - Ross Castle, 228, 234, 238, 260, 286
 - Trim Castle, 128
- Castle Ward (near Strangford), 414-15, 443-44
- Castlewellan Forest Park, 34, 423, 447, 449
- Catholic University of Ireland (Dublin), 57, 68

- Causeway Coast Path (Antrim), 447
 Cave Hill Country Park (Belfast), 32, 36, 43, 390, 391, 393, 442
 Visitor Centre, 391
 Céide Fields (near Ballina), 31, 45, 344, 345, 348, 368, 425
 Cellphones, 421, 480
 Chapter One (Dublin), 11, 68, 90, 94
 Charles Fort (Kinsale), 26, 168, 173, 188, 189
 Chester Beatty Library (Dublin), 15, 24, 37, 48, 52, 55, 66
 Silk Road Café, 90, 98–99
 Children, traveling with. *See also* Animals and wildlife; Marine attractions; Parks
 adventure centers, 205, 329, 471, 472
 fairs, 256, 260, 264, 275, 478–80
 festivals, 43, 205, 371, 478–80
 medieval banquets, 42, 297, 312, 336, 410–11
 pony trekking, 42, 329, 337, 447, 471
 websites on, 485
 Children, traveling with (by region), 40–43
 Belfast, 43, 442
 Cape Clear Island, 205, 480
 Castlebar, 43, 371, 480
 Connemara, 42, 329, 337
 Cork (Co.), 41, 200–1
 Dingle, 41–42
 Dublin, 40
 Galway/Clare, 336–37
 Kerry (Co.), 41–42, 284–87
 Killarney National Park, 42
 Northern Ireland, 43, 442–47
 Sligo/Mayo, 370–71
 Wexford/Waterford, 40–41, 160–61
 Christ Church Cathedral (Dublin), 52
 Churches and cathedrals, 16 (by name or first significant word, e.g., St. Columb, Cathedral of)
 Aghadoe Church, 225
 Belfast Cathedral, 385
 Christ Church Cathedral, 52
 Holy Trinity Cathedrals, 26, 133, 136, 149
 Kildavnet Church, 364
 Long Man, Church of the, 123
 St. Anne's Church, 16, 169, 172, 174, 177
 St. Canice Cathedral, 122
 St. Colman's Cathedral, 169, 173, 209
 St. Columb, Cathedral of, 34, 433
 St. Eugene's Cathedral, 434
 St. Fin Barre's Cathedral, 172, 179
 St. Mary's Cathedral, 16, 39, 234, 464
 St. Michan's Church, 16, 49, 54, 464
 St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church, 38, 296–97
 St. Patrick's Cathedral, 16, 24, 50, 73, 74
 The Twin Churches: Church of the Assumption and Church of the Immaculate Conception, 132, 136, 142
 Cistin Chléire (Cape Clear Island), 205
 Clancy's Bar (Cork City), 197
 Clare, County, 318, 320–22, 330–37.
See also The Burren; Galway and Clare, Counties
 coast, 334–35
 staying/dining in, 339–40
 Clare Heritage Centre (Corofin), 322, 330–31
 Clare Island, 35, 347, 360
 The Clarence (Dublin hotel), 48, 100, 104
 Octagon (bar), 110, 113
 The Tea Room, 91, 99
 Cleggan Riding Centre, 329, 337
 Cléire Lasmuigh (Cape Clear Island Adventure Centre), 205
 Clifden, 31, 319, 323, 328
 Cliffs of Moher, 320–21, 334–35
 Cloghane (*An Clochán*), 261, 281
 Cloghereen Nature Trail (Killarney), 225, 229
 Clonmines, 138
 Cobblestone (Dublin), 110, 114
 Cobh, 169, 173, 208, 209
 Cobh, the Queenstown Story, 169, 173, 209
 College Street/Plunkett Street (Killarney), 232
 Collins, Michael, 177, 180, 214–16, 458, 462, 467
 Collins Barracks (Dublin), 37, 61, 68
 Cong, 346
 Cong Abbey, 346
 Connemara, 31, 326–29, 472
 pony trekking, 42, 329, 337
 Connemara National Park, 9, 31, 42, 319, 323, 328, 337
 Connemara Marble Visitor Centre (Moycullen), 329
 Connemara Walking Centre, 328
 Corcomroe Abbey (near Ballyvaughan), 29, 318, 321–22, 333
 Cork, County, 166–221. *See also* Cork City; Kinsale
 accommodations, 180–81, 190–91, 210–11, 217–18
 for children, 41, 200–1
 East County, 206–11
 fast facts, 221
 for foodies, 194–97
 outdoor attractions, 202–5
 outdoor outfitters, 473–74
 restaurants, 181–84, 192–93, 210–11, 219–20
 suggested tours, 168–79, 186–189, 194–97, 200–9, 212–16
 West County, 212–20
 Cork Butter Museum, 172, 174–75
 Cork City, 169, 172, 174–85, 196
 accommodations, 180–81
 bus tour, 172, 177
 breweries and pubs, 196–97
 free attractions, 39
 jazz festival, 13, 172, 178, 480
 nightlife, 185
 restaurants, 181–84
 Cork City Gaol, 169, 172, 176, 177
 Cork Public Museum, 39, 169, 172, 177
 Corrib Princess cruises (Galway Bay), 299
 Country Life, Museum of (Castlebar), 68
 Courthouse Tavern (Cork City), 197
 Cow's Lane (Dublin), 48, 81
 Craft shopping
 Cape Clear Island, 205
 Killarney National Park, 225, 242
 Kinsale, 191
 Crag Cave (Castleisland), 237, 286
 Crawford Municipal Art Gallery (Cork City), 39, 169, 172, 177–78
 Crawford Gallery Café, 182
 Cromleach Lodge (Castleblawdin), 11, 357
 Cromwell, Oliver, 122, 156, 208, 228, 256, 389, 439, 456–57, 461
 Crown Liquor Saloon (Belfast), 378, 383, 387, 406, 408
 Cruises
 Cape Clear Island, 205
 Cork (Co.), 474
 Fungie the Dolphin tours, 260, 286, 287
 Galway Bay, 299, 319
 Killarney Lakes, 234, 238–39
 Lough Gill, 356

Seafari, 42, 263, 275, 284
 Shannon Estuary Dolphinwatch, 336
 Skellig Islands, 270–71
 Crumlin Lodge Fisheries (Inverin), 303
 Culture of Ireland, 464–67. *See also* Films; Literature; Music
 Cummingeera, 203–4
 Currency, x, 21, 35, 382, 421. *See also* “Fast Facts” for specific regions/cities
 Cushendun, 423, 427
 Custom House (Dublin), 38, 58

D

Dan O'Hara's Homestead Farm (Lettershea), 323, 329
 Davy Byrnes (Dublin), 64, 71, 110, 111
 Deanes (Belfast), 398, 399–400
 De Barra Jewellery (Kenmare), 275
 Delphi Adventure Centre (Leenane), 329, 471, 472
 Dentists and doctors. *See* “Fast Facts” for specific regions/cities
 Derry City, 34, 421, 423, 432–37, 440
 city walls, 432
 Free Derry Corner/mural, 440
 name of, 34, 435, 440
 politics and history, 432, 440, 459, 462
 staying/dining in, 436–37
 Derrynane House National Historic Park (Caherdaniel), 262, 266–67
 Design Concourse (Galway City), 298, 305
 DESIGNyard (Dublin), 81, 88
 Desmond Castle (Kinsale), 26, 168, 173, 186
 De Valera, Eamon, 68, 458, 462
 Devenish Island, 450–51
 Devil's Punchbowl (Cave Hill Country Park, Belfast), 393
 Dingle (*An Daingean*), 8, 256, 260, 278–79, 282–83, 286
 for children, 41–42
 staying/dining in, 282–83
 Dingle & Sciúird Archaeological Adventures, 288
 Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, 42, 279, 287
 Dingle Peninsula, 256, 278–83
 Dingle Way, 290
 Slea Head Drive, 260–61, 279, 281
 Dingle Races, 8, 278
 Dingle Regatta, 278
 Dingle Way, 290
 Dining experiences, best, 7, 11. *See also* specific regions/cities and locations
 Dinis Cottage (Killarney), 239
 Disabilities, travelers with, 487
 Diving, 472
 Cork (Co.), 205, 473
 Kerry (Co.), 281, 474
 Skellig Islands, 271
 Doheny and Nesbitt (Dublin), 62, 64, 111
 The Donkey Sanctuary (Liscarroll), 41, 201
 Doolin, 321, 334
 Dooney Rock (Lough Gill), 374
 Down, County, 35, 423
 Dromahair, 374
 Drombeg Stone Circle (near Glendore), 171, 214
 Druid Theatre (Galway City), 31, 295, 312, 314, 319
 Drumcliff, 31, 348, 355–56
 Drumena Cashel Stone Fort (near Castlewellsan), 423, 449
 Dublin, 7, 24–25, 46–129. *See also* Trinity College
 arriving in, 129
 for children, 40
 day trips from, 116–28
 fast facts, 129
 favorite moments, 48–49
 free attractions, 37–38
 hotels, 100–9
 literary heritage, 64, 70–75
 museums, 66–68
 nightlife, 110–15
 pub crawl, 62–64
 restaurants, 90–99
 St. Patrick's Day in, 13, 478
 shopping, 24, 57, 80–81, 82–89
 statues/monuments, 57, 71, 73, 77
 suggested tours, 50–73, 76–81, 116–128
 Temple Bar district, 7, 24, 57, 80–81, 89, 100
 Dublin Area Rapid Transit (DART), 129
 Dublin Castle, 24, 52, 460
 Dublin City Gallery. *See* Hugh Lane Gallery
 Dublin Ghost Bus, 40, 61
 Dublin Woollen Mills, 82, 87
 Dublin Writers Museum, 15, 25, 48, 53, 68, 71, 73
 Chapter One restaurant, 11, 68, 90, 94
 Dublin Zoo, 40, 59, 60
 Duke of York (Belfast), 387
 Dún Aengus (Inishmore), 301
 Dún an Oir Fort (Dingle Peninsula), 261

Dunbrody, SS, emigrant ship (New Ross), 26, 133, 136, 146, 158
 Dunbrody Abbey (near Duncannon), 133, 138
 Duncannon, 138
 Dundrum Castle, 439
 Dunguaire Castle (near Galway City), 297, 312
 Dunluce Castle (Bushmills), 423, 429, 440
 Dunluce Centre (Bushmills), 43, 445
 Dunquin, 261, 290
 Dursey Island, 170, 212

E

Earhart, Amelia, 447
 Eask Tower (Dingle), 260, 279
 East County Cork, 206–9
 staying/dining in, 210–11
 Easter Rising, 38, 48, 53, 68, 176, 303, 457–58, 462
 Eco-friendly tourism, 484
 Eden (Dublin), 11, 90, 95
 Electricity, 485
 Embassies and consulates, 485
 Northern Ireland, 417
 Emergencies, 485. *See also* “Fast Facts” for specific regions/cities
 Empire Music Hall (Belfast), 406, 407–8
 Enniscoe House and Gardens (Ballina), 368, 369
 Enniscorthy, 136, 159
 Enniscorthy Castle, 136, 145
 Enniskerry, 26
 Exploris (Portaferry), 415–16, 444, 445
 Eyre Square (Galway City), 30, 294, 296, 306, 319, 322

F

Fallers of Galway, 298, 305
 Falls and Shankill roads (Belfast), 32, 36, 386, 388–89, 420, 422, 438, 439
 Family travel, 40–43, 485. *See also* Children, traveling with
 Famine, Irish, 29, 186, 324–25, 461
 exhibition on (Wexford Town), 15, 132, 136, 145–46, 157–58
 ghost towns of, 265, 364
 Fashion and clothing. *See* Woollen wear
 Fermanagh, County, 35
 Fernhill House: The People's Museum (Belfast), 386, 438
 Ferns, 144
 Ferns Granary, 136
 Ferry travel, 481–82. *See also* “Fast

- Facts" for specific regions/cities
to Aran Islands, 295, 301
to Blasket Islands, 261, 280
to Clare Island, 360
to Portaferry, 415, 445
to Skellig Islands, 257, 262, 266, 271
- Festivals/Special events
best of, 13
by month, 478-80
- Festivals/Special events (specific)
Achill Walks Festival, 373
Bloomsday Festival, 70-71, 479
Dublin International Film Festival, 478
Dublin Theatre Festival, 480
Festival of Music in Ireland, 480
Galway Arts Festival, 13, 479
Guinness Cork Jazz Festival, 13, 172, 178, 480
International Storytelling Festival, 205, 480
Kinsale Gourmet Festival, 13, 173, 195, 480
Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival, 333, 479-80
Pan Celtic Festival, 478
RoolaBoola Children's Art Festival, 43, 371, 480
St. Patrick's Day (Dublin), 13, 478
Wexford Festival Opera, 140, 480
- Films, 467
- Firkin Crane Cultural Centre (Cork City), 174, 175-76
- Fishing, 472
Cork (Co.), 211, 473
Galway/Clare, 303, 338, 474
Kerry (Co.), 474
Sligo/Mayo, 474-75
- Fishy Fishy Café (Kinsale), 11, 168, 192, 194-95
- Food and wine tours, 471
- Foodies, attractions for (Cork/Kinsale), 13, 173, 194-97, 480
- Fota House, Arboretum & Gardens, 173, 208-9
- Fota Wildlife Park (Fota Island), 41, 169, 173, 200, 208
- Four Courts (Dublin), 38, 54-55
- Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor Centre (Ballina), 347, 368
- Franciscan Friary (Killarney), 232
- Franciscan Well Brewery (Cork City), 197
- Free attractions, 36-39
- Free Derry Corner/mural (Derry City), 440
- Frower Point (near Kinsale), 188, 189
- Fungie the Dolphin, 8, 42, 256, 278, 286
tours featuring (Dingle), 260, 286, 287
- G**
- Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking region), 266, 281, 302, 346, 463
- Gallarus Oratory (Dingle Peninsula), 261, 279
- Galleries. *See also* Museums
Crawford Municipal Art Gallery, 39, 169, 172, 177-78
Douglas Hyde Gallery, 79
Galway Arts Centre, 31, 38, 294, 297, 319, 322
Garter Lane Arts Centre, 133, 136, 150
Hugh Lane Gallery, 25, 37, 53
The Lavit Gallery, 39, 172, 179
Model Arts Centre and Niland Gallery, 350
National Gallery of Ireland, 37, 58, 68
Ormeau Baths Gallery, 36, 382
Sligo Art Gallery, 352
Temple Bar Gallery & Studios, 37, 57, 80
Triskel Arts Centre, 178
- Galway, County, 318-19, 322-23. *See also* Connemara; Galway City
staying/dining in, 33
- Galway and Clare, Counties, 316-41
for children, 336-37
fast facts, 341
outdoor outfitters, 474
staying/dining in, 338-40
suggested tours, 318-23, 326-37
- Galway Arts Centre, 31, 38, 294, 297, 319, 322
- Galway Arts Festival, 13, 479
- Galway City, 30-31, 292-315, 318-19, 322
day trips from, 300-3
fast facts, 315
favorite moments, 294-95
free attractions, 38
hotels, 310-11
Medieval Quarter, 30, 294, 297, 318, 322
nightlife/entertainment, 31, 312-14
restaurants, 308-9
shopping, 298, 304-7
suggested tours, 296-303
- Galway City Museum, 38, 297, 322
- Galway Irish Crystal Centre, 38, 298, 304, 305
- Galway Races, 299, 479
- Galway Woollen Market, 295, 304, 306
- Gap of Dunloe (Killarney), 228, 236-37, 255, 260, 290
- The Garrick (Belfast), 387
- Garter Lane Arts Centre (Waterford City), 133, 136, 150
- Gay and lesbian travelers, 485
bars and clubs (Belfast), 407
bars and clubs (Dublin), 115
- G.B.C. (Galway Bakery Company), 295, 309
- Genealogical research attractions
Clare (Co.), 322, 330-31
Cork (Co.), 209
Waterford (Co.), 150
Wexford (Co.), 156-57, 158
- General Post Office (Dublin), 7, 24-25, 38, 48, 53, 129, 457-58
- Giant's Causeway (Bushmills), 7, 9, 34, 43, 420-21, 423, 428-29, 445, 451-52
- Giant's Ring (Ballynahatty), 416
- Gleann Mór (Big Glen; Connemara), 328
- Glenbeigh, 27, 257, 265
- Glendalough, 14, 25, 44, 48, 116-18, 470
- Gleninsheen Wedge Tomb (near Ballyvaughan), 9
- Golf, 472
Cork (Co.), 211
Galway/Clare, 311, 474
Kerry (Co.), 266, 474
Killarney, 247
Sligo/Mayo, 475
- Gonne, Maud, 362-63
- Gortin Glen Forest Park (Cullion), 451
- Gougane Barra (Macroom), 202
- Government tourist offices, 478.
See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
- Grafton Street (Dublin), 24, 57, 73
- Grand Opera House (Belfast), 379, 383, 422
- Granuaile's Tower (Achill Island), 364
- Granuaile Visitor Centre (Louisburgh), 43, 370
- Great Saltee Island (near Wexford Town), 163
- Gregans Castle Hotel (Ballyvaughan), 10, 11, 340
- Grogan's Castle Lounge (Dublin), 63, 111-12
- Guildhall (Derry City), 434

Guinness (stout), 61, 196, 198, 230
 Guinness Cork Jazz Festival, 13, 172, 178, 480
 Guinness Storehouse (Dublin), 61
 Gus O'Connor's Pub (Doolin), 321, 334

H

Hang gliding (Achill Island), 35, 364, 475
 Ha'penny Bridge (Dublin), 24, 53, 80
 Hartmann & Son Ltd. (Galway City), 295, 304, 305
 Hazelwood Sculpture Trail (Lough Gill), 374
 Heaney, Seamus, 75, 465
 The Hercules Bar (Belfast), 387
 Heritage parks
 Bunratty Castle & Folk Park, 42, 320, 336
 Derrynane House National Historic Park, 262, 266-67
 Irish National Heritage Park, 40, 136, 140, 158, 160
 National 1798 Visitor Centre, 40, 136, 158
 High Street (Killarney), 232
 Hiking. *See* Walking/Hiking
 Hill of Tara (near Navan), 44, 127-28
 Hillsborough Castle & Gardens, 411-12
 Historical tours, 471
 Belfast, 32, 386, 438, 470
 Dublin/Glendalough, 470
 Kerry (Co.), 288
 Kinsale, 168, 173, 188
 Titanic Tours (Cobh), 173, 208
 Wexford/Waterford, 142, 156-59
 History
 of Ireland, 159, 456-63
 of Northern Ireland, 438-40, 458-59, 462
 Holidays, 485
 Holy Trinity Cathedrals (Waterford City), 26, 133, 136, 149
 Hook Peninsula. *See* Ring of Hook
 Horseback riding, 472. *See also* Pony trekking
 Connemara, 329
 Kerry (Co.), 474
 Northern Ireland, 447
 Sligo/Mayo, 475
 Wexford/Waterford, 164
 Horse racing
 Antrim (Co.), 478
 Dingle, 8, 278
 Dublin, 479
 Galway City, 299, 479
 Kerry (Co.), 479

Limerick, 480
 Hotel Europe (near Killarney), 234, 247
 Hotels. *See* Accommodations; *see also specific regions/cities and locations*
 Hugh Lane Gallery (Dublin), 25, 37, 53

I

Ilacullin (Garnish Island), 170, 212-13
 Inishmore (*Inis Mór*), 300-1
 Inishmurray, 352
 Inistioge, 8, 122-23
 Innisfallen, 9, 225, 238
 Innisfree, Lake Isle of (Lough Gill), 345, 348, 356, 374
 Insurance, 485-86
 medical, 486
 trip cancellation, 485-86
 International Museum of Wine (Kinsale), 186
 Internet access, 486. *See also* "Fast Facts" for *specific regions/cities*
 Inverin (*Indreabhán*), 303
 Ionad Arann (Inishmore), 300
 Ireland
 best of, 2-17
 for children, 40-43, 485
 fast facts, 485-87
 favorite moments, 7
 free attractions, 36-39
 special-interest trips, 470-75
 strategies for travelers, 20-21
 suggested tours, 24-35
 travel tips, 478-87
 Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition (near Wexford Town), 15, 26, 132, 136, 145-46, 157-58
 Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin), 37
 Irish National Heritage Park (near Wexford Town), 40, 136, 140, 158, 160
 The Irish President's House (*Áras an Uachtaráin*; Dublin), 37-38, 60
 Itineraries, best, 24-45
 ancient sites/ruins, 44-45
 for children, 40-43
 free, 36-39
 off the beaten track, 32-35
 one-week, 24-27
 two-week, 28-31

J

Jackie's Bistro (Spiddal), 303, 329
 James Joyce Centre (Dublin), 70, 479
 James Joyce Statue (Dublin), 71, 73
 James Fort (near Kinsale), 188, 189
 Jarvey rides (Killarney), 42, 224, 228, 233, 237, 260, 286, 290

Jerpoint Abbey (near Kilkenny), 123
 JFK Trust Dunbrody (New Ross), 26, 133, 136, 146, 158
 Jim Edwards (Kinsale), 192-93, 195
 John F. Kennedy Arboretum (New Ross), 136, 146
 Jola's (Kinsale), 193, 195
 Joyce, James, 15, 64, 70, 71, 75, 113, 298-99, 322, 465
 Bloomsday (Dublin), 70-71, 479
 Centre (Dublin), 70, 479
 statue of (Dublin), 71, 73

K

Kayaking, 472
 Cork (Co.), 205, 473-74
 Galway (Co.), 471, 472
 Mayo (Co.), 475
 Wexford/Waterford, 164
 Keel (Achill Island), 35
 Keem Bay (Achill Island), 364
 Kells Priory, 123
 Kenmare, 8, 42, 254, 258, 264, 274-77
 Fair Day, 275
 staying/dining in, 276-77
 Kenmare Druid Circle, 274
 Kenmare Market, 254, 274
 Kenmare Place (Killarney), 233
 Kenmare Walking Club, 290
 Kennedy, John F., 133, 136, 146, 158, 296, 462
 JFK Trust Dunbrody (New Ross), 26, 133, 136, 146, 158
 Kennedy's Pet Farm (near Killarney), 42, 284
 Kerry, County, 254-91. *See also*
 Dingle Peninsula; Kenmare; Ring of Kerry; Skellig Islands
 for children, 41-42, 284-87
 fast facts, 291
 hiking, 288-90
 outdoor outfitters, 474
 staying/dining in, 268-69, 276-77, 282-83
 suggested tours, 254-63
 Kerry Bog Village Museum (near Glenbeigh), 257, 265
 Kerry County Museum, 286
 Kerry the Kingdom (Tralee), 42, 260, 286
 Kerry Way, 229, 257, 288
 Kevin, Saint, 44, 48, 116
 Kids. *See* Children, traveling with
 Kildavnet Church (Achill Island), 364
 Kilkenny, 120-23
 Kilkenny Castle, 17, 120-21
 Killarney Grand, traditional music

- night at, 228, 249
 Killarney Lakes, 234, 238–39, 255, 289
 Killarney Lakes cruises, 238–39
 Killarney National Park, 8, 9, 27, 222–29, 236–39, 254–55, 260, 264, 286
 for children, 42
 hiking, 39, 225, 229, 289–90
 jarvey rides, 42, 224, 228, 237, 260, 286, 290
 Killarney Town, 27, 224–25, 228, 232–34, 255, 258, 264
 day trip to Cork, 237
 fast facts, 251
 favorite moments, 224–25
 free attractions, 39
 hotels, 246–48
 nightlife, 249–50
 restaurants, 243–45
 shopping, 240–42
 suggested tours, 226–29, 232–39
 Killyard Fiord (Connemara), 328
 Killorglin, 27, 256, 260, 264
 Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum (Dublin), 40, 49, 61, 68
 Kilmurray Bay, 281
 Kinsale, 8, 26, 168, 173, 186–93
 accommodations, 190–91
 craft shopping, 191
 historic strolls, 168, 173, 188
 restaurants, 7, 168, 192–93, 194–95
 Silly Walk, 188–89
 Kinsale Gourmet Festival, 13, 173, 195, 480
 Kinsale Regional Museum, 26, 168, 173, 188
 Knocknarea (near Carrowmore), 45, 355, 362
 Knockreer Estate (Killarney), 39, 225, 236, 255, 474
 Knowth (near Slane), 44, 124–25
 Kylemore Abbey & Garden, 31, 319, 323, 326–27
 Kyteler's Inn (Kilkenny), 122
- L**
 Lagan Weir & Visitor Centre (Belfast), 378, 384–85
 Lahinch Seaworld & Leisure Centre, 337
 Lahinch Surf School, 335
 Language, Irish. *See* Gaeltacht
 The Laurels (Killarney), 228, 245
 The Lavit Gallery (Cork City), 39, 172, 179
 Learning trips, 470–71
 Legananny Dolmen (Slieve Croob), 416
 Leinster House (Dublin), 38, 56
 Leo Burdock (Dublin), 61, 90, 96
 Letterfrack, 31, 42, 319, 323, 328
 Lewis Glucksman Museum (Cork City), 172, 176
 Linen Hall Library (Belfast), 383
 Lisdoonvarna, 30, 318, 321, 333
 Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival, 333, 479–80
 Lismore, 134, 152–53
 Lismore Castle, 17, 134, 152–53
 Lismore Heritage Centre, 134, 153
 Literature. *See also specific authors*
 in Dublin, 64, 70–73
 famous authors, 74–75, 464–67
 Gaelic, 280
 and monks/scribes, 14, 76, 272–73
 Little Killary Adventure Company (Leenane), 471
 Little Skellig (Island), 28, 271
 The Little Skillet (Kinsale), 193, 195
 Londonderry. *See* Derry City
 Londonderry, County, 35
 The Long Hall (Dublin), 63–64, 112
 Long Man, Church of the (near Kilkenny), 123
 Lost property, 486
 Loughcrew, megalithic tombs at, 44
 Lough Gill, 31, 345, 348, 373
 Lough Gill Cruises, 356
 Lough Gill Drive, 345, 356, 373–74
 Lough Ine, 204, 473–74
 Lough Leane (Lower Lake), 225, 228, 234, 238
 Lough Neagh, 32–34, 422–23
 Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, 32, 422, 450
 Lusitania Memorial (Cobh), 209
 Lynch's Castle (Galway City), 296
- M**
 Mac Eocagain/Galway Woollen Market, 295, 304, 306
 Macgillycuddy's Reeks (Killarney), 229, 236–37, 289–90
 Maeve, Queen, 45, 127, 355, 362–63
 Mahon Falls (near Dungarvan), 26, 133, 134, 153, 164
 Mail and postage, 421, 486. *See also* Post offices
 Malone, Molly, statue of (Dublin), 57, 73, 98
 Man Friday (Kinsale), 193, 195
 Marine attractions. *See also* Animals and wildlife
 Dingle Oceanworld Aquarium, 42, 279, 287
 Exploris, 415–16, 444
 Fungie the Dolphin Tours, 260, 286, 287
 Lahinch Seaworld & Leisure Centre, 337
 Seafari, 42, 263, 275, 284
 Shannon Estuary Dolphinwatch, 336
 and sustainable tourism, 484
 Market House (Kinsale), 188
 Markiewicz, Constance, 176, 362–63
 Marsh's Library (Dublin), 72–73
 Mary Gibbons Tours (Dublin), 470
 Maumturk Mountains (Connemara), 328
 Max's Wine Bar Restaurant (Kinsale), 193, 195
 Mayo, County, 31, 42–43, 344–45, 346–48, 358–61, 364–73. *See also* Achill Island; Ballina; Sligo and Mayo, Counties; Westport staying/dining in 361, 365, 369
 Mayo North Heritage Centre (Ballina), 347, 368
 McArt's Fort (Cave Hill Country Park, Belfast), 393
 McCafferty, Nell, 362–63
 McCourt, Frank, 467
 McDaid's (Dublin), 49, 62–63, 110, 112
 McDonagh's (Galway City), 297, 308, 309
 McGann's (Doolin), 321, 334
 Meath, County
 ancient sites/ruins, 44, 124–28
 Medical assistance. *See* "Fast Facts" for doctors and dentists in specific regions/cities
 Medical insurance, 486
 Medieval banquets
 Bunratty Castle, 42, 336
 Carrickfergus Castle, 410–11
 Dunguaire Castle, 297, 312
 Medieval Quarter (Galway City), 30, 294, 297, 298, 318, 322
 The Meeting of the Waters (Killarney), 239
 Merchant Hotel (Belfast), 378, 402, 404–5
 Michael Collins Memorial Centre (Clonakilty), 172, 214–16
 Miles vs. kilometers, 21, 35, 382, 421, 483
 Mizen Head, 171, 204, 216, 473
 Model Arts Centre and Niland Gallery (Sligo Town), 350

- Monasteries, ancient, 14, 44. *See also specific sites*
and literary preservation, 14, 76, 272-73
- Morning Star (Belfast), 387, 409
- Mossy Woods Nature Trail (Killarney), 229, 289
- Mount Leinster (near Enniscorthy), 164
- Mount Slievemore and deserted village (Achill Island), 35, 347, 364
- Mount Stewart House, 416
- Moy House (Lahinch), 10, 340
- Moyle Way (Antrim), 447
- Moyné Abbey (near Ballina), 344, 347, 366
- Muckcross Abbey (Killarney), 228
- Muckcross House and Gardens (Killarney), 9, 226-8, 255, 260
combination tickets, 236, 286
The Garden Restaurant, 228
Mucros Craft Shop, 225, 242
trail maps and information from, 229, 239, 289, 290
- Muckcross Traditional Farms (Killarney), 236
- Mucros Craft Shop (Killarney), 225, 242
- Murals, 173, 440
Belfast, 7, 36, 386, 388-89, 438
Derry City, 440
Mutton Lane (Cork City), 39, 178
- Museums, 15. *See also Galleries*
Cork Butter Museum, 172, 174-75
Cork Public Museum, 39, 169, 172, 177
Dublin Writers Museum, 15, 25, 48, 53, 68, 71, 73
Fernhill House: The People's Museum, 386, 438
Galway City Museum, 38, 297, 322
International Museum of Wine, 186
Irish Agricultural Museum & Famine Exhibition, 15, 26, 132, 136, 145-46, 157-58
Irish Museum of Modern Art, 37
Kerry Bog Village Museum, 257, 265
Kerry County Museum, 286
Kilmainham Gaol Historical Museum, 40, 49, 61, 68
Kinsale Regional Museum, 26, 168, 173, 188
Lewis Glucksman Museum, 172, 176
National Museum of Ireland, 24, 37, 56, 68
Archaeology & History Museum, 68
Country Life Museum, 68
Natural History Museum, 37, 68
Oscar Wilde House Museum, 72
Seanchai—Kerry Literary & Cultural Centre Writer's Museum, 260
Sligo County Museum, 31, 345, 348, 352
Tower Museum, 34, 434
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, 411, 443
Ulster Museum, 15, 32, 36, 380
Waterford Treasures at the Granary Museum, 26, 133, 134-36, 150, 160
Wexford County Museum, 136, 145
The Workhouse Museum & Library, 435, 440
- Music, 230-31
Music, pubs known for, 114, 278
An Bodhran, 185
An Droichead Beag, 278
An Pucan, 294-95, 299, 312
An Spailpin Fanac, 185, 197
Cobblestone, 110, 114
Empire Music Hall, 406, 407-8
The Hercules Bar, 387
Killarney Grand 228, 249
O'Connor's, 249
O'Flaherty's, 278
O'Neill's, 64, 113
Mutton Lane Mural (Cork City), 39, 178
- N**
National Arboretum (Castlewellan Forest Park), 449
National Gallery of Ireland (Dublin), 37, 58, 68
National Museum Café (Dublin), 56, 98
National Museum of Ireland (Dublin), 24, 37, 56, 68
Archaeology & History Museum, 68
Country Life Museum, 68
Natural History Museum, 37, 68
National parks
The Burren, 9, 28-30, 318, 322, 330
Connemara, 9, 31, 42, 319, 323, 328, 337
Killarney, 8, 9, 27, 224-29, 236-39, 254-55, 260, 264, 286
Wicklow Mountains, 117-18
National Photographic Archive (Dublin), 37
National 1798 Visitor Centre (Enniscorthy), 40, 136, 158
National University of Ireland, Galway, international summer school at, 471
Natural History Museum (Dublin), 37, 68
Navan Fort (Armagh), 32-34, 422-23, 439-40, 450
Nendrum Monastic Site (Mahee Island), 414, 448
Newgrange (near Slane), 7, 14, 44, 125-27, 470
Newgrange Farm, 127
Newman House (Dublin), 57, 68
New Ross, 26, 133, 136, 146, 158
Nightlife. *See also Music; Performing arts; Pubs*
Belfast, 386-87, 406-9
Cork City, 185
Dublin, 62-64, 110-15
Galway City, 31, 312-14
gay/lesbian bars/clubs, 115, 407
Killarney Town, 249-50
No. 7 Eccles Street (Dublin), 70
Nora Barnacle House (Galway City), 30, 298-99, 319, 322
Northern Ireland, 21, 35, 418-53. *See also Belfast; The Troubles*
arriving in, 453
for children, 43, 442-47
currency, 21, 35, 382, 417, 421, 453
fast facts, 453
murals, 36, 386, 388-89, 438, 440
outdoor attractions, 448-52
politics and history, 438-41, 458-59, 462-63
road signs, 21, 35, 382, 421
safety in, 417, 439
suggested tours in, 32-34, 420-23, 426-29, 432-35, 438-52
travel tips, 421
- O**
O'Connell, Daniel, 262, 266-67, 461
O'Connor, Sinéad, 231, 362-63
O'Connor's (Killarney), 249
Octagon (Dublin), 110, 113
Odyssey Complex (Belfast), 43, 384, 398, 442
O'Flaherty's (Dingle), 278
Old Bushmills Distillery, 198-99, 429

Old English Market (Cork City), 12, 39, 169, 172, 178, 196
 Old Market Lane (Killarney), 232
 Old Middleton Distillery/Jameson Heritage Centre (Midleton), 207
 O'Malley, Grace (Gráinne Ní Mháille/Granuaile), 42-43, 338, 344, 358, 360, 363, 364, 370, 460
 O'Neill's (Dublin), 64, 113
 Organized tours, 470
 Ormeau Baths Gallery (Belfast), 36, 382
 Oscar Wilde House Museum (Dublin), 72
 Outdoor activities, 471-73
 Outdoor attractions, best, 9. *See also specific regions/cities and attractions*
 Outdoor outfitters, 473-75
 Cork (Co.), 473-74
 Galway/Clare, 474
 Kerry (Co.), 474
 Sligo/Mayo, 474-75
 Wexford/Waterford, 164

P
 Package tours, 470
 Padraig Pearse Cottage (Ros Muc), 303
 Parke's Castle (near Sligo Town), 348, 356, 374
 Parks. *See also* Heritage parks;
 National parks
 Castlewellan Forest Park, 34, 423, 447, 449
 Cave Hill Country Park, 32, 36, 43, 391, 393, 442
 Gortin Glen Forest Park, 451
 Peatlands Park, 423, 450
 Phoenix Park, 38, 40, 59-60
 Silent Valley Mountain Park, 34, 423, 449-50
 Parliament House/Bank of Ireland (Dublin), 38, 55-56
 Passports, 486
 Patrick, Saint, 14, 16, 24, 272-73, 460
 Pearse, Padraig (Patrick Pearse), 7, 109, 303, 458, 462
 Peat, 265, 424-25
 Peatlands Park (The Birches), 423, 450
 Performing arts
 in Cork City, 185
 Druid Theatre, 31, 295, 312, 314, 319
 Dublin Theatre Festival, 480
 Galway Arts Centre, 31, 38, 294,

297, 319, 322
 Galway Arts Festival, 13, 479
 Garter Lane Arts Centre, 133, 136, 150
 Perryville House (Kinsale), 188
 Pharmacies, 486. *See also* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Phoenix Park (Dublin), 38, 40, 59-60
 Pirate's Cove (Courtown Harbour), 40-41, 161
 Police. *See* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Pony trekking, 471. *See also*
 Horseback riding
 Connemara, 42, 328, 329, 337
 Northern Ireland, 447
 Portacloy, 372-73
 Portaferry, 445
 The Porterhouse/Porterhouse Central (Dublin), 52, 64, 81, 110, 114
 Portmagee, 257, 266
 Post codes (Northern Ireland), 421
 Post offices. *See* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities; *see also*
 General Post Office (Dublin);
 Mail and postage
 Potcheen (liquor), 199
 Poulabrone Dolmen (near Ballyvaughan), 9, 331-33
 Powerscourt House and Gardens (near Enniskerry), 26, 118-19
 Terrace Café, 118
 Powerscourt Waterfall (near Enniskerry), 26, 119
 Prince Albert Memorial Clock (Belfast), 385
 Public transportation. *See* Bus travel;
 Train travel
 Pubs, 21, 198. *See also* Beer, wine, and spirits
 Belfast, 386-87
 Cork City, 196, 197
 Dublin, 62-65
 Pubs, live music. *See* Music, pubs known for
 Puck Fair (Killorglin), 256, 260, 264, 479
 Purple Mountains (Killarney), 260

Q

Queen of Tarts (Dublin), 49, 90, 98
 Queen's University (Belfast), 32, 36, 381-82
 Quill's Woollen Market (Killarney), 240-41

R

Red Hand of Ulster, 388, 412
 Reginald's Tower (Waterford City), 26, 133, 136, 148-49
 Restaurants, best, 11. *See also specific regions/cities and locations*
 Ring of Hook, 133, 137-38, 146
 Ring of Kerry, 8, 27, 28, 224, 229, 254, 264-69
 one-week tour, 258-63
 staying/dining on, 268-69
 traveling counterclockwise on, 267
 Roads and road signs, 20-21. *See also*
 Car travel
 The Rock of Cashel, 14
 RoobaBoola Children's Art Festival (Castlebar), 43, 371, 480
 Ross Castle (near Killarney), 228, 234, 238, 260, 286
 Rosserk Abbey (near Ballina), 344, 347, 366
 Rothe House (Kilkenny), 121
 Ruins. *See* Ancient sites and ruins
 Russborough House (Blessington), 119

S

Safety, 486. *See also* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Northern Ireland, 417, 439
 Sailing, 471, 472
 Cork (Co.), 474
 Wexford/Waterford, 164
 St. Anne's Church (Cork City), 16, 169, 172, 174, 177
 St. Canice Cathedral (Kilkenny), 122
 St. Colman's Cathedral (Cobh), 169, 173, 209
 St. Columb, Cathedral of (Derry City), 34, 433
 St. Eugene's Cathedral (Derry City), 434
 St. Fin Barre's Cathedral (Cork City), 172, 179
 St. George's Market (Belfast), 379, 382, 394, 397
 St. Kevin's Way (Wicklow), 44, 117-18
 St. Mary's Cathedral (Killarney), 16, 39, 234, 464
 St. Michan's Church (Dublin), 16, 49, 54, 464
 St. Nicholas' Collegiate Church (Galway City), 38, 296-97
 St. Patrick's Cathedral (Dublin), 16, 24, 50, 73, 74
 St. Patrick's Day celebrations (Dublin), 13, 478
 St. Stephen's Green (Dublin), 25, 38, 57, 363
 Salthill, 299, 302

Sayers, Peig, 280
 Scatterry Island, 335
 Scilly, 188–89
 Scilly Walk, 188–89
 Seafari Eco-Nature Cruises and Seal-Watching Trips (Kenmare), 42, 263, 275, 284
 Seanchai—Kerry Literary & Cultural Centre Writer's Museum (Listowel), 260
 Séhán Ua Neachtain (Galway City), 295, 312, 313–14
 Self-catering accommodations, 484
 Selskar Abbey (Wexford Town), 26, 132, 136, 141
 Seniors, as travelers, 486–87
 Shankill and Falls roads (Belfast), 32, 36, 386, 388–89, 420, 422, 438, 439
 Shannon Estuary Dolphinwatch (Carrigaholt), 336
 Shaw, George Bernard, 58, 64, 72, 74, 213, 248, 464
 Shaw Birthplace (Dublin), 72
 Sheep's Head Way (Cork City), 204
 Shelbourne Hotel (Dublin), 7, 100, 108
 Shopping, best, 12
 Silent Valley Mountain Park, 34, 423, 449–50
 Skellig Experience (Valentia Island), 266, 270
 Skellig Islands, 257, 270–71, 272
 boat/ferry crossings to, 257, 262, 266, 271
 Little Skellig, 28, 271
 Skellig Michael, 14, 28, 257, 262, 266, 270–71, 272
 Sleah Head Drive (Dingle Peninsula), 260–61, 279, 281
 Sligo, County, 31, 34–35, 45, 345, 348. *See also* Sligo and Mayo, Counties; Sligo Town staying/dining in, 353, 357
 Sligo Abbey, 31, 345, 348, 350–52
 Sligo and Mayo, Counties, 342–75
 for children, 370–71
 fast facts, 375
 outdoor attractions, 372–74
 outdoor outfitters, 474–75
 suggested tours, 344–52, 354–56, 358–60, 364, 366–68, 370–74
 Sligo Art Gallery, 352
 Sligo County Museum, 31, 345, 348, 352
 Sligo Town, 31, 34–35, 345, 348, 350–53
 staying/dining in and around, 353, 357
 surrounding area, 354–57

Small towns, favorite, 8
 Smoking, 487
 Sneem, 263, 267
 Sober Lane (Cork City), 197
 The Spaniard Inn (Scilly), 188, 193, 195
 Special-interest trips, best, 470–75
 Spiddal (*An Spidéal*), 295, 299, 302–3, 329
 Spiddal Craft Village (*Cearclann an Spidéil*), 303, 323, 329
 Spire of Dublin, 73
 Sports. *See* Golf; Kayaking; Sailing; Surfing; Windsurfing
 Staigue Fort (near Castlecove), 267
 Standún (near Spiddal), 303
 Stoker, Bram, 16, 49, 54, 72, 74, 233, 234, 464
 Strategies for travelers, 20–21
 Summer Cove (near Kinsale), 189
 Surfing (Clare Coast), 335
 Sustainable tourism, 484
 Swift, Jonathan, 16, 72, 73, 74, 464

T

Tatler Jack (Killarney), 224, 228, 249, 250
 Taxes, 487
 Taxis. *See* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Telegraph Point (Valentia Island), 266
 Telephones, 487. *See also* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Temple Bar (Dublin), 7, 24, 57, 80–81, 89, 100, 478–79
 Temple Bar Book Market (Dublin), 80, 89
 Temple Bar Food Market (Dublin), 80, 89
 Temple Bar Gallery & Studios (Dublin), 37, 57, 80
 Temple House (Ballymote), 10, 357
 Terrace Café (Powerscourt, Enniskerry), 118
 Tintern Abbey (near New Ross), 26, 133, 138, 146
 Tipping, 487
 Titanic Tours (Cobh), 173, 208
 Toilets, public. *See* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Tone, Wolfe, 57, 114, 159, 214, 393, 457, 461
 Torc Mountain Walk (Killarney), 289
 Torc Waterfall (Killarney), 286, 289
 Torr Head Scenic Road, 34, 423, 427
 Tourism Ireland, 470, 478
 Tourist/Visitor information, 478.
 See "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Tours, organized/special-interest, 470–71
 Tower Museum (Derry City), 34, 434
 Trabeg Beach, 281
 Train travel, 21, 38, 483. *See also* "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 passes for, 39, 481, 482
 Tralee, 8, 42, 260, 286–87, 290
 Tralee-Blennerville steam train, 42, 286–87
 Traveling to Ireland, 20–21, 478–87.
 See also "Fast Facts" for specific regions/cities
 Travel tickets, 483
 Treyvaud's (Killarney), 232, 243, 245
 Trim Castle, 128
 Trinity College (Dublin), 25, 38, 55, 72, 76–79, 230, 460
 accommodations, 100, 109
 authors who attended, 72, 74–75, 234, 464–65
 Berkeley Library and sculpture, 79
 Book of Kells, 55, 72, 76, 273
 The Buttery, 79
 Campanile, 77
 College Park Cricket Pitch, 79
 Dining Hall, 77
 Douglas Hyde Gallery, 79
 Museum Building, 79
 Old Library, 76
 Triskel Arts Centre (Cork City), 178
 The Troubles, 438, 440, 458–59, 462–63
 Black Taxi Tours, 32, 386, 420, 438, 439, 470
 murals, 36, 386, 388–89, 438, 440
 Peace Line/Peace Wall, 7, 388
 Twelve Bens/Twelve Pins (Connemara), 9, 319, 323, 328
 Twice As Nice (Galway City), 298, 307
 The Twin Churches: Church of the Assumption and Church of the Immaculate Conception (Wexford Town), 132, 136, 142
 Tyrone, County, 35

U

Ulster Folk & Transport Museum (Cultra), 411, 443
 Ulster Museum (Belfast), 15, 32, 36, 380
 Ulster Way (Antrim), 447, 451
 University College Cork, 172, 176, 177
 Upper Cavehill Road (Belfast), 393
 U2, 99, 104, 231

V

- Valentia Heritage Centre, 265, 270
 Valentia Island, 28, 257, 262, 270,
 265–66
 bridge to, 266
 VAT (value-added tax), 487
 Vinegar Hill (Enniscorthy), 136, 159

W

- Walking/Hiking, 472
 Achill Island, 373
 Connemara, 328
 Cork (Co.), 188–89, 202–5
 Kerry (Co.), 288–90
 Killarney National Park, 39, 225,
 229, 289–90
 Northern Ireland, 447
 Wexford/Waterford, 142, 150
 Wicklow Mountains National
 Park, 117–18
 Warpipes, 230–31
 Water, drinking, 487
 Waterford, County, 133, 134–36,
 138, 148–55, 260, 164–65. *See*
also Wexford and Waterford,
 Counties
 staying/dining in, 151, 154–55
 Waterford City, 26, 134, 136, 148–51
 staying/dining in, 151
 surrounding area, 152–55
 Waterford City Hall, 148
 Waterford City Walking Tours, 150
 Waterford Crystal Factory, 26, 137
 Waterford Heritage Genealogical
 Centre, 150
 Waterford Treasures at the Granary
 Museum, 26, 133, 134–36, 150,
 160
 Water sports. *See* Kayaking; Sailing;
 Surfing; Windsurfing
 Waterville, 266
 Waterville Golf Links, 266
 Weather, 478, 479
 Wellington Bridge, 138
 West County Cork, 212–20
 staying/dining in, 217–20
 Westgate Heritage Tower (Wexford
 Town), 26, 132, 136, 140
 Westport, 31, 42–43, 344, 347,
 358–61
 staying/dining in, 361
 Westport House, 43, 344, 347,
 358, 370
 Wexford, County, 26, 40–41, 132–33,
 136–37, 138, 140–47. *See also*
 Wexford Town
 staying/dining in, 143, 147
 Wexford and Waterford, Counties,

- 130–65
 for children, 40–41, 160–61
 fast facts, 165
 historical attractions, 156–59
 outdoor attractions, 162–64
 outdoor outfitters, 164
 suggested tours, 132–42, 144–46,
 148–50, 152–53, 156–64

- Wexford County Museum
 (Enniscorthy Castle), 136, 145
 Wexford Town, 26, 40–41, 132, 136,
 140–43
 staying/dining in, 143
 surrounding area, 144–47
 walking tours, 142
 Wexford Wildfowl Reserve, 142, 162
 Whiskey, 113, 198, 425
 distilleries, 198, 199, 207, 429
 Whitepark Bay, 34, 423, 427–28
 Whitepark House (Ballintoy), 423,
 430
 White's Tavern (Belfast), 379, 385,
 387, 398, 401, 409
 The Wicker Man (Belfast), 378,
 394, 396
 Wicklow, County, 44, 116–19
 “Wild Wicklow Tour,” 470
 Wicklow Mountains National Park,
 117–18
 Wicklow Way, 117–18
 Wilde, Oscar, 72, 74, 464
 and Connemara, 9, 326
 Willie Clancy Summer School (*Scoil*
Samhraidh Willie Clancy), 470
 The Winding Stair (Dublin), 48, 99
 The Winding Stair (Galway City),
 295, 304
 Windsurfing, 472–73
 Achill Island, 35, 475
 Galway (Co.), 471
 Kerry (Co.), 474
 Northern Ireland, 444
 Wexford/Waterford, 164
 “Winegeese,” 186, 198–99
 Women of Ireland, famous, 362–63
 Woodstock Gardens (near Inistioige),
 8, 123
 Woolen wear, 240–42, 306–7
 Avoca (Dublin), 49, 82, 87–88, 91
 Avoca (Moll's Gap), 12, 225,
 241, 275
 Dublin Woollen Mills, 82, 87
 Foxford Woollen Mills Visitor
 Centre, 347, 368
 Galway Woollen Market, 295,
 304, 306
 Mucros Craft Shop, 225, 242
 Quill's Woollen Market, 240–41

- Spiddal Craft Village, 303, 323,
 329

- The Workhouse Museum & Library
 (Derry City), 435, 440

Y

- Yeats, Jack B., 58, 68, 177, 352
 Yeats, William Butler, 15, 31, 58,
 68, 75, 299, 352, 355–56, 362,
 363, 465
 grave of (Drumcliff), 348, 355–56
 Memorial Building (Sligo Town),
 31, 345, 348, 352
 and Sligo, 31, 348, 350, 355–56,
 373–74
 Yeats International Summer School
 (Sligo Town), 352, 470
 Yola Farmstead (Tagoat), 156–57
 Genealogy Centre, 156–57
 Youth hostels, 205, 484

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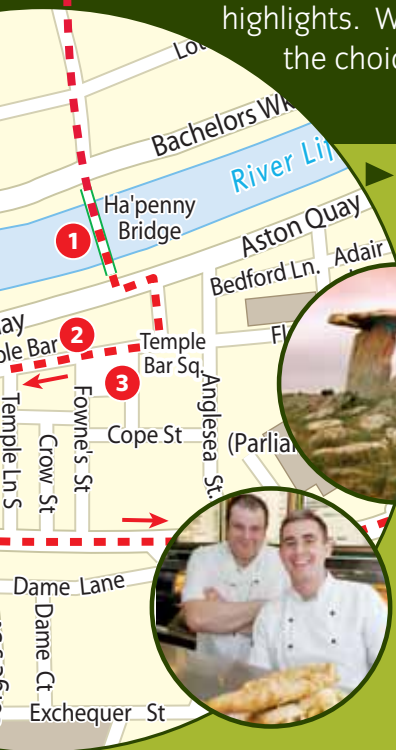
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